UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

GRADE ONE TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' BELIEFS ABOUT WHOLE LANGUAGE

BY

© MARGARET E. BRIMACOMBE

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT THEY HAVE READ, AND RECOMMEND TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH FOR ACCEPTANCE, A THESIS ENTITLED Grade One Teachers' and Students' Beliefs About Whole Language SUBMITTED BY Margaret E. Brimacombe IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Education.

William T. Fagan

Dr. William T. Fagan

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Ruth Hayden

Dr. H. M. (Ruth) Hayden

Date: October 22, 1990

This thesis is dedicated to all of the teachers in my life . . .

from the first, my parents, Jean and Geoff
to current friends, colleagues, and professors . . ..

Thank you for awakening me to the pursuit of
knowledge and all that you have and will continue
to contribute along my endless journey.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated grade one teachers' and students' beliefs about whole language. Through individual interviews with teachers and students, observation, teachers' self-reports in journal format, and student reading and writing samples, data were collected on six teachers' theoretical and operational beliefs about whole language and six high-achieving and six low-achieving students' beliefs about and strategies used when reading and writing. Teacher beliefs were analyzed as to their consistency among teachers and in relation to those discussed in whole language literature. Congruence/incongruence in each teacher's beliefs and actions was also analyzed. A summary of the strategies students use when reading and writing was determined through analysis of oral reading miscues and spelling errors and used to determine the congruence/incongruence in students' beliefs about reading and writing and their actions. A comparison was also made of the congruency of each teacher's beliefs with those of her high- and low-achieving student.

The result of these analyses demonstrated that although commonalities were found, there was a great amount of variability in teachers' beliefs about whole language. Teachers experienced difficulty articulating their beliefs about "process" as it relates to whole language, particularly reading.

Teachers' beliefs tended to be more inconsistent with low- than with high-achievers. Some teachers demonstrated greater congruence between what they believed and the nature of their

actions within the classroom, suggesting that the teachers of this study reflect a continuum from novice to experts regarding whole language beliefs and teaching.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The importance of literacy in current society is exemplified by the attention given it in "International Literacy Year" - 1990. Literacy is empowering and therefore desired for all members of society. Media attention to this issue continues to feed the already existing concern about the state of illiteracy in our country. Often an accusatory finger is pointed at the schools amid cries of ineffective teachers and teaching practices, closely followed by a call for a return to "the basics". If one accepts the importance of literacy in our society, then, understanding how literacy is acquired should be of great concern. While the impact of the family on children's literacy development is known, schools are still viewed as the primary institution responsible for its development. When society perceives this responsibility as not being addressed satisfactorily, questions arise about the quality of education students are receiving.

Research suggests that the "teacher variable" in the teaching of reading is the factor most directly related to student success or failure (VanderMeulen, 1978). As early as 1967, Bond and Dykstra (cited in Bawden, Buike, & Duffy, 1979) found that teachers rather than programs were related to instructional effectiveness in reading. This identification of the teacher as one of the, if not the, most influential factor in student success, makes it reasonable to argue that research which focuses on teacher thought and behavior should be pursued in an attempt to advance educational practice and ultimately the achievement of students. Wilson, Shulman, and Richert (1987) state that teachers possess theoretical as well as practical knowledge of subject matter and that "any portrait of teacher knowledge should include both aspects" (p. 108).

Those involved in the educational field acknowledge their responsibility to cultivate literate students and are constantly seeking to improve pedagogy. Over the past decade, teachers and researchers have put theory developed from a wide range of disciplines such as linguistics, psycholinguistics, child development, curriculum and anthropology into practice (Newman, 1985) and conducted research on the results of such practice (see Y. Goodman, 1989 and K. Goodman, 1989b for in-depth discussions on whole language theory and research). This "whole language" approach to the teaching and learning of the language arts has gained in popularity over the last few years. The approach has been perceived as everything from merely another "bandwagon" idea to "what good teachers do all the time anyway". These different perceptions of or beliefs about "whole language" have resulted in confusion over just what constitutes the philosophy of "whole language", how it is (or "should" be) implemented in the classroom and mostly importantly, its relationship to students' literacy development. Watson (1989) feels it is imperative for educators to not only define whole language, but "make sure that what occurs in classrooms is supported by and consistent with their definition" (p. 131).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe self-professed, whole language teachers' beliefs about whole language, beliefs about implementing whole language, and selected students' beliefs about and strategies used when reading and writing. In addition, determination of the congruence or incongruence between teachers' beliefs and their practice, teachers' and students' beliefs, and among teachers' beliefs was sought. The extensive review and synthesis of whole language philosophy was undergone to define the parameters of whole language and thus enable the researcher to establish the consistency or inconsistency of teachers' beliefs and actions with the literature.

Definition of Terms

Theoretical beliefs - statements accepted as true (Richardson-Koehler, 1988; Sykes, 1976) that teachers supply outside the reality of the classroom

Operational beliefs - beliefs in perceived action

Whole language - "a philosophical stance" (Newman, 1985, p. 1) which supports "beliefs, teaching strategies and experiences that have to do with kids learning to read, write, speak, and listen in natural situations" (Watson, 1989, p. 132-133), utilizing "complete texts in communicative situations" (Clarke, 1987, p. 386). (See

Chapter 2 for an in-depth discussion of the characteristics of whole language)

Low-achiever in language arts - a student, who in the teacher's judgement, is among those experiencing the most difficulty with reading and writing

High-achiever in language arts - a student, who in the teacher's judgement, is among those experiencing the most success with reading and writing

Miscue - any divergence a reader makes from a written text while reading orally
(e.g. omitting/inserting/substituting text words)

Graphophonic knowledge - knowledge about the sounds of language and their graphic representation

Syntatic knowledge - knowledge about the grammatical structures of the English language

Semantic knowledge - knowledge about the relationships and concepts within a language that establish meaning

Instructional reading level - reading level used for reading instruction determined by meeting word identification ($\geq$90% correct word identification) and comprehension ($\geq$70% correct response to comprehension questions) criteria

Sound-based strategy - encoding a word by using letters to represent phonemes heard in the articulated word (e.g. WUNS for once) (Malicky, 1987)

Print-based strategy - encoding a word using visual memory or an understanding of orthography (e.g. WATE for wait) (Malicky, 1987)

Research Questions

1) What theoretical beliefs about "whole language" do "whole language" teachers possess?
2) What operational beliefs about "whole language" do "whole language" teachers possess?
3) To what extent, if any, are these beliefs about "whole language" similar between and among teachers, and to those described in the literature?
4) What beliefs do grade one students possess about reading and writing?
5) What strategies do grade one students use when reading and writing?
6) To what extent, if any, are a teacher's and his/her students' beliefs of reading and writing congruent?

Design of the Study

The study was undertaken with six Grade 1 teachers, who had been identified by a large urban school district's language arts consultants as those involved in whole language teaching. Twelve Grade 1 students, including a high- and low-achiever from each teacher's classroom, comprised the student subjects. Data were collected on teachers through a combined procedure of observing a teacher-selected language arts time in the classroom, interviewing teachers and students, and teachers' journals. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, categorized, and tabulated, providing a description of teachers' beliefs and actions. Other teacher data were compared with interview data and the consistency or inconsistency of data determined.

Student data were acquired by eliciting a reading and writing sample from students and interviewing. Individually, students read passages at their instructional level from the Bader Reading and Language Inventory (Bader, 1983), in private, tape-recorded sessions. Those students who did not meet the criteria on the preprimer passage, read a predictable book after it was first read by the researcher. Students were questioned about strategies observed when reading and about reading in general. Subsequently, the students were asked to write a story or on a topic of their choice. At the conclusion of the writing, students were asked about strategies observed when writing and about writing in general. Oral reading miscues were recorded and analyzed using a modified version of the Reading Miscue Inventory (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 1987) to determine the reading processes engaged by the student when identifying words in context. Spelling errors were analyzed to determine the type of strategy (sound-based or print-based) used by the student when encoding. Student interview data were used to analyze the consistency between students' beliefs and actions.

Assumptions

1) Teachers possess knowledge and beliefs that influence their actions.
2) Teachers and students are metacognitively aware of their beliefs about "whole language" and reading/writing respectively and are able and willing to discuss them with the researcher.
3) Information given by teachers and students is truthful.
4) Students' oral reading miscues and spelling approximations reflect their processing strategies.

Limitations/Delimitations

1) Due to the sample size and selection procedures of the subjects, the focus will be on understanding beliefs in specific contexts and raising hypothesis, rather than on generalizing the results to all grade one "whole language" teachers.
2) While the researcher acknowledges that whole language involves aspects of oral (listening and speaking), written (reading and writing) and visual (viewing and representing) literacy, the focus of this study was reading and writing.
3) The researcher is unable to distinguish influences of the home environment from those of the school environment on students' reading and writing strategies.
4) Due to the nature of the open-ended questions used, teachers and students may not have reported all (and possibly the most predominant) strategies that they use.

5) Labels used by the researcher for particular concepts and strategies may be unfamiliar to the subjects or hold different meanings.

Significance of the Study

"Whole language" is a phrase that is currently being bandied about freely by language arts teachers. The popularity and ubiquity of the "whole language" movement justifies concern regarding "what 'whole language' means" to the classroom teacher. Understanding the relationship between teachers' theoretical and operational beliefs about language learning is a necessary step toward analyzing the relationship between these beliefs and their subsequent influence on the literacy development of students. Weaver (1988) believes that

> children's success at reading reflects their reading strategies; their reading strategies typically reflect their implicit definitions of reading; children's definitions of reading often reflect the instructional approach; and the instructional approach reflects a definition of reading, whether implicit or explicit. In fact, the instructional approach may reflect a definition quite different from that consciously espoused by the teacher. . . (p. 2).

Another reason for the study was concern with a mounting dissatisfaction among educators, especially administrators and others not directly involved in classrooms, with whole language philosophy and practice. Because this new "movement" has not solved our illiteracy problem and may not have shown improved scores on standardized tests, it is concluded that this new way of teaching and learning is no better than what was used before, perhaps worse if assessment on isolated skills with very beginning readers is taken into consideration. And perhaps in some whole language classrooms this is true. Anyone who has learned anything new knows that it takes time not only to understand new concepts but to relate those concepts to a number of different contexts (situations and people) and then to personalize the learning so that it is congruent with one's own personality and style. Teachers are no different. Those trying to develop an understanding and use of a whole language philosophy are somewhere on the continuum from novice to expert and while teachers may call themselves whole language teachers, the reality may be that they have just begun to understand what the philosophy involves and thus are providing a program for students that is not complete. This does not mean that a return to the "old ways" of teaching is in order, but that differences in understanding whole language philosophy and transferring that knowledge into practice in the classroom exist in teachers. Stakeholders in education need to acknowledge these differences and make teachers' professional development a priority in order to provide students with the best programs possible.

For those interested in curriculum design and implementation, a study of this nature is significant as "teachers adapt or adopt new practices in their classrooms if their beliefs match the assumptions inherent in the new programs or methods" (Richardson-Koehler, 1988, p. 2). Thus, understanding teachers' beliefs is crucial to successful curriculum implementation (Olson, 1981, cited in Munby, 1984) and effective teacher education.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 2 contains a review of the current literature related to the purpose of the study. The two main areas of study reviewed are teacher beliefs and whole language.

Chapter 3 describes the research design utilized in the study. It includes information on the subjects, instruments, pilot study, procedures, and the coding and analysis of data.

Chapter 4 presents teachers' background data and the findings of classroom observation, interviews, and teacher journals on teachers' beliefs about whole language, focusing on reading and writing. While the data collected and presented is now in the "past", the summaries following each table and the teacher profiles have been purposely written in the present tense in an attempt to preserve the "living quality" of the comments made by teachers.

Chapter 5 presents the findings on students' beliefs about reading and writing and students' behaviors when reading and writing. Teachers' beliefs about whole language for high- and low-achieving students is reported also. The congruence/incongruence of 1) students' beliefs and students' actions, 2) teachers' beliefs and students' beliefs, and 3) teachers' beliefs and teachers' actions is discussed.

Chapter 6 contains a brief summary of the study, conclusions, implications of the findings for whole language teachers, administrators, those involved in the professional development of pre-service and practicing teachers, and educational theorists, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Having undertaken in this study, the description of whole language teachers' beliefs, their relationship to classroom life, and students' beliefs and reading/writing behavior, a discussion of the literature on the identification of teacher beliefs, the relationship of these beliefs to actions or behaviors, and the concept of "whole language" is warranted. Many terms have been used in the literature to refer to the notions or ideas that teachers hold regarding the teaching of reading and writing. The term "beliefs" has been used by this researcher in a generic manner to refer to such notions and ideas.

Teacher Beliefs

To provide a larger framework from which to interpret the specific information on beliefs and actions, the following model of teacher thought and action (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 257) is included (Figure 2.1).

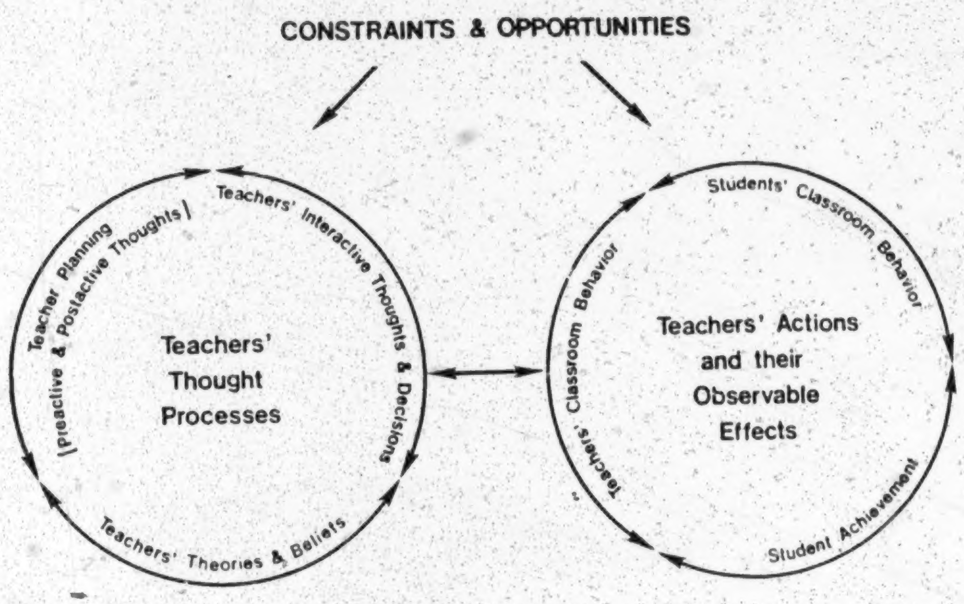
CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES
Teachers' Thought Processes
Teacher Planning
(Preactive & Postactive Thoughts)
Teachers' Interactive Thoughts & Decisions
Teachers' Theories & Beliefs
Teachers' Actions and their Observable Effects
Students' Classroom Behavior
Student Achievement
Teachers' Classroom Behavior

Figure 2.1: A Model of Teacher Thought and Action

The above figure illustrates the interactive nature of teachers' thoughts and decisions (based on their theories and beliefs) with their behavior in the classroom. This behavior influences both students' behavior and achievement. Constraints and opportunities present in school situations may affect any part of this interaction. For example, a teacher may hold the belief that reading involves the active construction of meaning by the reader, utilizing text information and his/her background knowledge. This belief, then, has the potential for influencing the teacher's planning for instruction and other thoughts and decisions regarding presentation of the concept to students. The teacher's classroom behavior is reflective of this belief. Continuing with the above example, the teacher could decide to model the construction of meaning during a read-aloud session to the class. Such action by the teacher has the potential to influence how students perceive reading (as an active constructive process) and affect their achievement in this area as well. Outside constraints such as a skills-based curriculum or an autocratic administrator could influence the interaction between thought and action. Teachers' actions and their effects will also influence their own thought processes as they reflect on their teaching (actions) and the effect it has had on students. This type of reflection on one's own teaching often brings about changes in beliefs and theories about teaching and learning.

Studies in the area of teacher thinking and teacher knowledge have utilized an array of terms, such as "knowledge structures" (Roehler, Duffy, Herrmann, Conley, & Johnson, 1988), "theory" (Harste & Burke, 1977), "beliefs" (Duffy & Metheny, 1979), "teachers' conceptions" (Duffy, 1977, cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 1987), "personal constructs" (Kelly, 1955, cited in Bussis, Chittenden, & Amarel, 1976), "teachers' understandings" (Bussis et al., 1976) and "teachers' schema" (Conley, 1984). Researchers disagree over whether these terms are merely different labels for the same concept (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987), involve "slightly different meanings" (Clark & Yinger, 1977, p. 295), or have substantial differences in meaning (Roehler et al., 1988).

Roehler et al. (1988) suggest that the value of knowing only a teacher's theories and beliefs is limited and argue that exploring a teacher's "knowledge structure" which is "the 'network' of relationships the teacher establishes among (reading and reading instruction) concepts" (p. 159) is of greater value. This group of researchers moved to a study of knowledge structures, from studying beliefs and theories, as they believe knowledge structures to be more "fluid" (changeable through experience), individual, emotionally neutral, and responsive to contextual influences. Wilson, Shulman, and Richert (1987) add another dimension of knowledge with their label, "pedagogical content knowledge", defined as "an understanding of what it means to teach a particular topic as well as knowledge of the principles and techniques required to do so" (p. 118). In the present study, two sets of beliefs were explored: theoretical and operational. The "operational beliefs" are an attempt to describe the relationship between beliefs and the realities teachers face in classrooms.

Many researchers in the area of reading have set out to investigate the relationship between beliefs or theoretical orientations and teacher actions/behavior. The results have been mixed, indicating that the findings in this area are not conclusive, nor the potential for study exhausted.

On one side there are researchers such as Harste and Burke (1977) who claim that

> what has become both readily apparent and surprisingly persistent concerning the relationship between reading instruction and the reading process is that: (1) despite atheoretical statements, teachers are theoretical in their instructional approach to reading, and (2) despite lack of knowledge about reading theory, per se, students are theoretical in the way in which they approach learning to read (p. 32).

Morris and Fagan (1987) found that despite the lack of comprehension instruction being conducted by teachers of any theoretical orientation, "different orientations are distinguishable by the practices in which teachers engage" (p. 81). After developing and validating an instrument which identified teachers' particular theoretical orientations to reading, DeFord (1985) used the instrument followed by in-class observations with a group of teachers to conclude that a strong relationship existed between theoretical orientation and teacher behavior. In the area of writing, Savory (1986) found a high degree of congruency between teachers' beliefs and practices, while investigations of the relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs (Fear, Anderson, Englert, & Raphael, 1987; Proctor, 1986) concluded that students' chosen strategies tend to reflect their teachers' beliefs.

Conversely, there are researchers who claim that "the evidence from research on teaching is virtually unanimous: classroom teachers may possess abstract, theoretically-based conceptions of reading but these conceptions do not significantly influence their teaching of reading" (Duffy, 1981, p. 10). This conclusion was the result of a three year study conducted at Michigan State University, investigating influences on teachers' instructional decisions (Bawden et al., 1979).

One potential reason offered for these conflicting results is the popular use of pencil-paper measures to identify beliefs or theoretical orientations (Richardson-Koehler & Hamilton, 1988). Hoffman and Kugle's (1982) findings, from two pencil-paper measures of beliefs, indicated that they *could* conclude that "for most teachers there is no strong relationship between teacher beliefs and teacher behaviors" (p. 6). When results of focused interviews were considered, however, it was more reasonable to "bring to question the notion that we can validly assess beliefs through a paper-pencil type task" (p. 6). In this study, therefore, belief data were accumulated using interviews, journals, and observation.

Another design limitation with many of these studies is the attempt to slot teachers' beliefs into predetermined theoretical orientations or sets of beliefs (Bawden et al., 1979; Duffy & Metheny, 1979; Morris & Fagan, 1987; Richards, Gipe, & Thompson, 1987). As several of the researchers discovered, they could not make the teachers' beliefs "fit" their categories and had to reorganize, combine and/or rename them. Furthermore, beliefs-practice incongruence often arose because only theoretical, not operational, beliefs were elicited from teachers.

Gove (1983) suggests that while teachers often act in ways which are consistent with their beliefs, they sometimes act in incongruent ways because they "have not thought about whether practices are logically related to each other and how they relate to their beliefs" (p. 261). Conley (1984) hypothesizes that "levels of knowledge" may influence a teacher's ability to "generate relationships among instructional plans, goals, and actions . . [and] be adept at selecting from alternatives when making instructional decisions" (p. 133). He suggests that teachers with lower levels of knowledge about reading instruction would have more difficulty than those with higher levels in demonstrating consistency across beliefs and actions. Similarly, Fagan (1989) uses the terms borrowed from Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich and Anderson (1988, cited in Fagan, 1989), "beginning or introductory knowledge" and "advanced knowledge", to discuss teachers' understanding of whole language philosophy. He hypothesizes that teachers employ methodology consistently or inconsistently depending upon their individual "state of whole language theory, belief system or philosophy which in itself may be inconsiderate or not fully developed" (p. 5). Fagan argues that it is necessary for teachers to go beyond the "introductory knowledge" stage and "*attain a deeper understanding of content material, reason with it, and apply it flexibly in diverse contexts*" (Spiro et al., 1988, cited in Fagan, 1989, p. 6). Failure to reach the "advanced knowledge" stage is frequently due to "the general tendency to reduce important aspects of complexity" (Spiro et al., 1988, cited in Fagan, 1989, p. 6).

Rich (1985), based upon her work with groups of teachers struggling to understand and use a whole language philosophy, feels that each whole language teacher

> has engaged in a clarification of beliefs. She understands and acknowledges the assumptions which are subsequent to those beliefs. Previous assumptions about the way learning goes have been questioned and the belief system underlying these old assumptions examined. (As the Wiz said to Dorothy when she tried to find her way back to Kansas, "it ain't enough to know where you're goin'; you gotta know where you're coming from.") The whole language teacher knows where she is coming from. The process of discarding the old beliefs (is) a painful one for many whole language teachers (p. 19).

Rich (1985) has seen many whole language teachers who began their "journey" into using this new philosophy by applying teaching strategies learned with little thought and flexibility, "pretending their way into whole language teaching" (p. 19). Once the surface structure of the philosophy was in place, teachers then began to analyze, observe, read, ask questions and to construct a "personal reality of whole language" (p. 19). This "reality" constantly develops and undergoes refinement as the teacher integrates new experiences and learnings with established beliefs.

The final consideration to be discussed here is the way in which and degree to which beliefs may influence actions. Jones (1982) states that "teachers' instructional practices *reflect* [italics added] their concepts of the reading process" (p. 776). The large-scale MSU study superficially supports the influence of teachers' theories of reading on reading instruction (Duffy, 1981); however, "instructional decisions in reading are not govered [sic] by beliefs about theoretical models of reading *only* [italics added]" (Duffy & Anderson, 1984, p. 102). Other factors, such as pupil's ability level, complexity of teacher's conceptions, and influence of the basal reading program came into play when instructional decisions were being made (Bawden et al., 1979). Roehler et al. (1988) hypothesize that teachers who have organized knowledge of reading and reading instruction in an integrated and coherent manner are able to access that knowledge and use it successfully in instructional decision-making. Hoffman and O'Neal's (1984) findings support those of Bawden et al. (1979) and Duffy and McIntyre (1982, cited in Hoffman & O'Neal, 1984), suggesting that "basal manuals serve as an explicit guide to teachers in making day-to-day instructional decisions" (p. 143). In "whole language" classrooms, where basal readers are not the primary source of instruction, it remains to be seen what teachers' use as a base for their day-to-day instruction.

Whole Language

Judith Newman (1985) makes a substantial understatement when she acknowledges that "there is no simple definition of 'whole language'" (p. 1). An accepted definition of "whole language" remains somewhat elusive for two reasons. Teachers resist a standard, dictionary-type definition of whole language as each individual's understanding of the concept tends to be idiosyncratic, reflecting their individual personal and professional growth (Watson, 1989). Furthermore, whole language involves in-depth understanding of many disciplines such as language development, child development, and pedagogy, to name but a few, that creating a definition with any specificity becomes unwieldy. Attempts at brief definitions which serve to give a "flavor" for the concept, address the theory of "natural learning" (Cambourne & Turbill, 1990). That is, viewing whole language as "a label for mutually supportive beliefs and teaching strategies and experiences that have to do with kids learning to read, write, speak, and listen in natural situations" (Watson, 1989, p. 132-133) or "a term which is used to refer to reading and writing instruction which utilizes complete texts in communicative situations" (Clarke, 1987, p. 386).

Watson (1989) iden[illegible]es three dimensions of whole language which contribute to its definition: "the research in literacy and learning that is accepted as credible by whole-language advocates;

the pedagogical theory that emerges from that research; and the practice that is consistent with the theory" (p. 130). The following description of whole language will address these three aspects. The review has been organized into six categories which deal with whole language views on: language, how children learn language, the classroom environment, the teacher's role in the classroom, the student's role in the classroom, and evaluation.

Language

Fountas and Hannigan (1989) state that "language is language only when it is whole" (p. 134). Many other researchers agree with this perspective (Rich, 1986; Goodman, 1986; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988; Watson, 1989; Watson, Crenshaw, & King, 1984; Weaver, 1988). Keeping language "whole" includes many facets. Watson and Crowley (1988) encourage educators to

> think of language as having two major parts, linguistic and pragmatic; in real situations, when children are learning language, these are always kept whole and together (whole language). The linguistic part is made up of three major systems: semantic, syntactic, and grapho/phonemic. The semantic system . . . has to do with meaning, sense, ideas, and thoughts. The syntactical system is . . . the grammatical structure that supports meaning. The grapho/phonemic system . . . (includes) the visual information that can be used: letters (graphemes), punctuation marks, underlinings, italics (etc.) . . . (and) the sounds (phonemes) that are available to language users (p. 234).

The pragmatic system is comprised of the "off-the-page context (situation) in which the language is used . . . (and) past experiences and knowledge . . .--schemas [sic]--that relate to the language event" (Watson & Crowley, p. 234). Natural language always occurs in a context which allows a reader to access schemata s/he can utilize in constructing the message being received. Decontextualizing language places readers at a disadvantage by removing access to this type of information. Thus, in whole language classrooms, "pragmatics . . . are never separated from the linguistic aspects of language" (Watson & Crowley, 1988, p. 234).

Two related aspects to the notion of keeping language whole are that (1) natural learning of language proceeds from whole to part, as in spoken language when children express whole communications with sound sequences and holophrases, and only later refine the words and word parts to communicate their meanings more precisely, and (2) the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (Goodman, 1986; Fountas & Hollingsworth, 1989). In many learning situations, such as learning to ride a bike, it becomes obvious that knowing how to perform individual skills (the parts) such as balancing, pedalling, steering, applying brakes, shifting gears, etc. does not in itself enable one to ride a bike (the whole). Only when those skills are working together in an integrative manner as an individual is atop a "real" bike does riding take place. Gaining control over reading and writing is similar. Mastery of discrete skills, such as sound-symbol relationships, does not necessarily mean that individuals can interrelate all the necessary skills so that meaning can be constructed whether one is reading or writing.

The "wholeness" of language also includes the notion that the modes of communication (oral--(listening, speaking), written--(reading and writing), and visual--(viewing, representing) remain "whole", not treated as separate entities which require different ways of teaching and learning. Two interrelated processes, comprehending and composing meaning, underlie the receptive and expressive aspects of each mode respectively. Goodman (1986) views oral and written language as "two parallel language processes" (p. 22) as they have similar characteristics--"symbols and system used in the context of meaningful language acts (literacy events)" (p. 23). Fountas and Hannigan (1989) and Gunderson and Shapiro (1987) support the teaching of reading and writing to young learners simultaneously as learning in one language area supports development in another.

The final area related to "wholeness" involves the integration of language development with content area learning (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Pickering, 1989; Weaver, 1988; Goodman, 1986). Watson (1989) refers to the content areas as "grist for the literacy mill" (p. 137). Language permeates everything that children are involved in throughout the school day (and beyond). In these situations, students use language for learning while at the same time use and learn about the language of content areas.

Using language is an active, constructive process whether an individual is reading, writing or using another of the communication modes. Reading is viewed by Goodman (1986) as a process in which "readers predict, select, confirm, and self-correct as they seek to make sense of print" (p. 38). Fagan (1987) expands this view of reading to include a more encompassing list of processes. They are "attending, analysing, associating (meaning and symbol-sound), predicting, inferring, synthesizing, generalizing, and monitoring" (p. 69). Writing, too, is viewed as process which includes rehearsal, composing/drafting, revising and editing, and publishing/sharing (Graves, 1983). Meaning is always central to any language event. The goal of readers is "comprehension of meaning" while writers look to achieve "expression of meaning" (Goodman, 1986, p. 39).

Because language is a functional and intentional tool for learning, thinking and communicating, individuals use language in specific contexts for particular purposes. Generally, language is social in nature--utilized by individuals to communicate their thoughts, feelings and ideas to themselves and others.

How Children Learn Language

A basic tenet of whole language is that children should learn to read and write in the same manner in which they learned oral language (Cambourne, 1984; Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988; Weaver, 1988; Goodman, 1986). Weaver (1988) describes this as occurring "gradually, naturally, with a minimum of direct reading instruction, and with encouragement rather than discouragement and constant corrections" (p. 44). Cambourne (1984) names seven conditions under which children learn to speak and concludes that these conditions are also of use in understanding how children acquire written language. These conditions are immersion in the language (oral/printed), demonstration or modeling (of talking/reading and writing), expectation (that the child will become proficient), responsibility (for one's own learning), approximation (allowing the child to approximate the adult model), employment (opportunity to use language/practice), and feedback (response to child which is meaning-centered, non-threatening, and meets the child's needs).

Goodman (1986) believes that "language is easy to learn if it meets a functional need the child feels" (p. 18). Malicky and Norman (1988) agree, adding that the "'small is easy' myth should most likely be replaced by a 'meaningful is easy' principle although meaning is easy when it's real, natural, interesting, relevant, belongs to the learner, and when it has social utility and purpose for the learner" (p. 19). Weaver (1988) translates this into classroom practice where students would never be asked to "read artificially simplified or contrived language, or to write something that does not have a 'real' purpose and audience" (p. 45).

Children learn language while using language (Goodman, 1986; Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Pickering, 1989). There is "no division between first 'learning to read' and then (reading) to learn" (Weaver, 1988, p. 45). Thus, instruction begins with opportunities for students to be involved in real literacy events using authentic texts--the well-known idea that students learn to "read by reading" and "write by writing". When students are engaged in these events, the opportunity for "mini-lessons" that focus on skills and strategies students need arises. Malicky and Norman (1988) comment that "whole language does not mean ignoring print but rather helping the child develop strategies for identifying words in context using language knowledge and print cues (phonics) together" (p. 24).

Learning language is developmental. Researchers have studied the developmental stages through which children progress as they become proficient language users. Children develop as readers through first, reading environmental print and "playing" at reading. The child's focus here is with meaning as s/he may successfully or unsuccessfully read environmental print (e.g. "Crest" read as "toothpaste") and retell familiar stories while looking at the text, although little match may occur between the text and retelling. Children then progress to an awareness of print cues and pay more conscious attention to the written language itself. They begin to discover print conventions such as sound-symbol relationships and see how language and visual cues work together. Through use of predictable materials, they continue this discovery, experience success with reading, while beginning to build a sight vocabulary. Gradually, as they read more in a variety of contexts, their reading skills are refined and develop a level of automaticity. The stages of writing development begin with scribbling and progress to random use of letters and letter-like forms to communicate a "message" (prephonemic stage), to a phonetic stage in which children use spellings that match the sounds heard in the articulated word. Once at this stage, many children begin to branch out in their attempts to write for different purposes and audiences. The child then reaches the transitional stage where his/her understanding of spelling goes beyond "spelling like it sounds". Standard spellings of some words now appear and the child may use reference sources for some spellings. Experimenting with written forms continues. The final stage, referred to as the conventional or independent stage sees children using many standard spellings and demonstrating a more complete understanding of the functions and forms of written language. At the base of whole language theory is the belief that while there are developmental stages through which children pass as they continually increase their control over written language, there is "no inherent order in the way language is learned" (Watson, Burke, & Harste, 1989, p. 6), "no hierarchy of sub-skills, and no necessary universal sequence" (Goodman, 1986, p. 39).

Developing control over language processes involves children's attempts to compose and comprehend meaning which may result in errors, often referred to as "approximations" or "miscues". These errors are seen as a natural part of learning, which indicate growth toward control over written language (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Goodman, 1986; Clarke, 1987). Watson (1989) feels that "language users can learn as much from getting language wrong (producing a non-standard form) as they can from getting it right, and maybe more" (p. 137).

Children come to school with an already well-developed language system. Their language and thought "have their roots at home and in the community" (Watson, 1989, p. 137). The language that a child brings to school is accepted and used as a cornerstone for developing proficiency in written language.

A desire to make sense out of their world motivates children to learn (Rich, 1985). Teachers feed this interest by helping students understand that reading and writing allow them to address their need to communicate. Goodman (1986) feels that "motivation is always intrinsic .. . . Extrinsic rewards have no place in a whole language program" (p. 40).

Classroom Environment

Cambourne's (1984) aforementioned conditions under which children learn language have ramifications for what is included in a whole language environment. "Immersion" in language requires a classroom that is not only littered with print (Gunderson & Shapiro, 1988; Fountas & Hannigan, 1989), but "littered with literacy" (Watson & Crowley, 1988, p. 267). Cambourne and Turbill (1990) view whole language classrooms as being characterized by two broad teaching strategies: "immersion in a wide range of language forms and demonstrations of the processes that underpin effective control of reading, writing, thinking, and language use" (p. 338). The language forms may include students' and teachers' printed language (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988) as well as a variety of "literature". Literature is used here as a broad term which encompasses a variety of literary forms and genres such as stories, informational books, newspapers, and magazines. Goodman (1986) defines whole language materials as "anything the children need or want to read or write" (p. 33). Whether or not "basals" are included as whole language materials remains debatable. Goodman (1986) acknowledges that basals are not used by many whole language teachers, while other teachers salvage whatever literature is suitable. The ways in which students are immersed in language include activities such as having texts read or stories told to them, engaging in "shared reading", and being given time for personal "volume reading and writing" (Malicky & Norman, 1988). This immersion into language is often organized by teachers around topics or "themes" (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988; Goodman, 1986). Fagan (1989), while acknowledging that themes can provide a unifying framework for language activities, questions the consistency of using themes, often planned for by the teacher for the entire year, in a program which believes that student interest and need should shape curriculum.

The condition of "modeling or demonstrating" is addressed within the environment in several ways. The environment is "talk-focused" (Rich, 1986, p. 4) to allow for sharing of ideas and strategies by students as well as teachers. Varied learning situations are utilized--"corporate, small group and individual teaching/learning situations (as) no single teaching methodology suits all children" (p. 3). Learning centers are common (Goodman, 1986). Grouping for instruction is flexible and often formed by interest (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988). Heterogeneous groupings allow those students experiencing difficulty to be provided with models of skilled language users.

Teachers and students, regardless of their proficiency, talk about what they do as they read and write (Watson, 1989; Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1987). These metalinguistic and metacognitive discussions take place during individual and group discussions as situations present themselves. This is part of the "feedback" that students receive from both the teacher and other students.

Strategies students are employing are raised to a conscious level, while students see and discuss strategies that may not yet be in their repertoire.

If students' "approximations" are to be allowed and even encouraged as they develop into proficient language users, the environment needs to be one that will support children *and teachers* taking risks (Goodman, 1986; Goodman et al., 1987). This means a safe, supportive, "home-like" environment where "there is a sense of caring for children and childhood" (Rich, 1985, p.17) and students know that their attempts will be valued. This concept is closely linked to another characteristic of whole language classrooms--that the teacher and students establish themselves as a "community of learners". Goodman et al. (1987) describe this phenomenon as "everyone in the whole language classroom is a participating member of an active literacy community" (p. 144). The "expectation" is put forth that all members of this community have something to offer and will succeed in developing their language abilities. Clarke (1987) perceives that the relationships found within the classroom are key to its success. He describes three types of relationships--"between children and their reading/writing (one of enjoyment and ownership), between the adults and the children (the former are 'encouragers' as well as teachers, the latter 'initiators'), and among the children (cooperative rather than competitive)" (p. 386). Watson and Crowley (1988) expand on the role of students, describing them as "resource persons and teachers" (p. 267).

Cambourne's conditions of "responsibility" and "employment" may best be addressed by a child-centered environment in which students are actively involved in their learning. Child-centered may be understood as children and their needs being at the center of the curriculum. Specifically referring to language development, Fagan (1989) sees child-centered as meaning not only that "all language activities originate with and revolve around the child" (p. 10) but that teachers combine their knowledge of language, children and learning with observations of children to provide appropriate teaching and learning situations for each student. That students should be actively involved in their learning goes beyond the parameters of whole language and is now widely accepted as the way in which children learn best. In a whole language environment this translates to students "doing" language every day. That is, they constantly read, write, speak, listen, view, and represent for different purposes and audiences in varied contexts, using diverse forms (authentic literacy events). In such situations, students are active physically, socially, cognitively, creatively and affectively.

Parents tend to be a visible part of a whole language classroom. They often provide assistance in the classroom in the role of "additional teacher"--joining the "community of learners". Teachers and parents agree that by combining their efforts, becoming partners in the education of children, the greatest achievement results.

Teacher Role

The teacher's role in a whole language program is arguably the least agreed upon facet and perhaps the least understood. There is some question as to whether or not teachers should be involved in direct instruction with their students. Fountas and Hannigan (1989) feel that there is "no contradiction between direct skill teaching and whole language learning" (p. 136), while others like Reutzel and Hollingsworth (1988) see "instruction" (interestingly, not "learning") as being informal and discovery based and therefore state that direct instruction techniques are *not* used to teach children written language. Others see teachers as utilizing the "teachable moment" (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Watson & Crowley, 1988). Staab's (1990) view finds the middle ground.

> Successful whole literacy teachers do not simply arrange an environment and allow the acquisition of literacy to happen. They mediate the learning process in often subtle, yet definite ways. Slaughter (1988) has concluded that most whole literacy teachers use both direct and indirect instruction (p. 551).

The mediation Staab mentions takes place within the context of meaningful material (Rich, 1986; Fountas & Hannigan, 1989). That is, specific skills such as phonics and handwriting are addressed by teachers, but kept within real reading and writing situations as are discussions designed to bring processing strategies to an awareness level.

Teachers support students in their endeavors to become proficient language users, believe in their abilities, and respect them as individuals. A deficit model of learning and teaching is replaced by a view which focuses on what students can do-- the strengths they possess (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Rich, 1986; Watson & Crowley, 1988; Goodman et al., 1987). Goodman (1986) looks upon whole language as being a humanitarian and compassionate view of education in which teachers "respect (kids) as learners, cherish them in all their diversity, and treat them with love and dignity" (p. 25).

Teachers are manipulators of the classroom environment. They are responsible for ensuring that the environment they provide for students promotes literacy development. Teachers "guide, support, monitor, encourage, and facilitate learning, but do not control it. (They) seek to create appropriate social settings and interactions, and to influence the rate and direction of personal learning" (Goodman, 1986, p. 29). Part of providing this literate environment includes the teacher's role as a model of literate behavior. Teachers read and write with students, share their expertise, receive feedback from students, and respond regularly (often through conferences) to student's reading and writing attempts (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988; Goodman, 1986).

Teachers are "kidwatchers" to use a phrase coined by Yetta Goodman. They observe students as they engage in functional uses of language and draw conclusions about their strengths and needs in order to tailor instruction to meet those needs.

Teachers are partners with parents in the education of their children. Watson (1989) comments that "whole language teachers do not assume that all students' problems stem from the home. Rather than assigning blame, whole-language teachers act positively--they invite mothers and fathers to become whole-language parents" (p. 137).

Whole language teachers "regard themselves as professionals" (Goodman, 1986, p. 28). They are "able to support, with theory based directly on research, their decisions about curriculum and instruction in their classrooms" (Goodman, 1986, p. 25). They are the professional decision makers--the curriculum leaders in their classrooms (Goodman, 1989a).

A whole language teacher remains a learner (Watson & Crowley, 1988)--open to new experiences, views and learnings. All whole language teachers, regardless of their position on the continuum from "beginning knowledge" to "advanced knowledge" (Spiro et al., 1988, cited in Fagan, 1989, p. 6) continue to analyze, observe, read, reflect, and ask questions--continually shaping and redefining their "personal reality of whole language" (Rich, 1985, p. 19). Whole language teachers never "arrive". By selecting to use a whole language philosophy, they have committed themselves to a professional life of inquiry.

Student Role

Students bring to school a "rich and fully functioning knowledge of the spoken aspect of language" (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989, p. 134). They are viewed as competent learners who, prior to formal teaching, have learned a great deal (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988). Teachers encourage students to bring their "experiences and their language into the classroom" (Goodman et al., 1987, p. 142). Students want to make sense of their world and thus are intrinsically motivated to learn. Whole language philosophy sees children as wanting to become members in the "literacy club".

It is accepted in a whole language classroom that students take ownership and responsibility for their own learning (Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988; Watson, 1989). Choice is a key factor in ensuring this responsibility and ownership. Students need opportunities to write and read for their own purposes. They need to feel in control of their engagements with language as the teacher nudges them into new and more challenging language situations.

Students, along with teachers, establish the curriculum of the classroom. The students' interests and needs shape the environment.

Students are expected to become full, active members in the "community of learners". That is, they assist one another with reading and writing (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988) and take part in activities and discussions. Students are expected to do their best with the knowledge of language processes acquired thus far in their development.

Evaluation

Since the nature of whole language philosophy is children learning language in natural situations, to be consistent, evaluation needs to occur in a similar manner. Cambourne and Turbill (1990) identify a "'natural' theory of assessment" which focuses on what parents do. Parents

> spent sustained periods of time both observing and interacting with their children, . . . had an implicit but well-developed and coherent 'theory' of what 'maturity' is and how 'growth' should proceed in children, . . . seemed to know what to look for . . . a set of 'indicators' (p. 330).

This assessment theory suggests certain practices for the teacher in the classroom.

Evaluation is viewed as informal. Watson (1989) proposes that "whole-language teachers urge learner-referenced evaluation over norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing" (p. 138). Observation of students in functional language situations and discussions with them provide rich data about their strengths and needs. As Goodman et al. (1987) put it, "teachers find out what kids are trying to do and then they help them do it" (p. 143). Assessment takes place in the course of on-going classroom literacy events (Watson & Crowley, 1988; Goodman, 1986, Fountas & Hannigan, 1989; Au, Scheu, Kawakami & Herman, 1990), with information gathered from the "full range of daily language activities" (Cambourne & Turbill, 1990, p. 341). Students are "used as informants" (Watson & Crowley, 1988, p. 269), confirming, disconfirming, and adding to what teachers have observed.

Educators have compatible, yet somewhat differing views, on the goal of assessment. Watson (1989) sees evaluation as "primarily to inform learners themselves" (p. 138), while Au et al. (1990) view assessment as providing teachers and students with "information useful in promoting students' growth in literacy" (p. 575). Goodman (1986) adds another dimension to the goal--monitoring students' progress and gaining a sense of their needs, as well as teachers using the information to plan and modify instruction. Self-evaluation is valued, for both teachers and students (Watson & Crowley, 1988; Goodman, 1986).

Goodman (1986) feels very strongly that much more can be learned by observing students than by formal testing. He believes "(standardized tests) are inappropriate for judging whole language programs and useless in serving the legitimate aims of evaluation" (p. 42). One could therefore conclude that standardized tests have no place in whole language evaluation. (For a humorous look at information gleaned from standardized tests, see Miriam Cohen's, First Grade Takes A Test). Cambourne and Turbill (1990) acknowledge that a natural theory of assessment views "the enormous superiority of the 'knowledgeable-human-as-instrument' over the 'formal-test-as-instrument'" (p. 339).

Cambourne and Turbill (1990), in their search for a theory of naturalistic evaluation discovered that a similar approach to evaluation, termed "responsive evaluation", had already been pioneered by Stake (1975, as cited in Cambourne & Turbill, 1990) and refined and extended by Guba and Lincoln (1981, as cited in Cambourne & Turbill, 1990). This is an approach that "aims at the study of behavioral phenomena within the context of the situation" (Cambourne & Turbill, 1990, p. 340). Cambourne and Turbill, then, worked with "coresearchers"--whole language teachers in classrooms, to look at applying responsive assessment procedures to their classrooms. They discovered that teachers used mainly two sources of information in collecting data on students--"the formal and informal 'conferences' they continually carried out . . . and the artifacts the children produced as part of their ongoing classroom activities" (p. 341). Teachers made notes on the language processes students demonstrated, kept work samples, looked at "reading logs" and "reflective journals". The types of information teachers recorded were classified into five categories:

> 1) the strategies learners use as they read and write; (2) the level of explicit understanding learners have of the processes they can and should use when reading and writing (i.e., metatextual awareness); (3) learners' attitudes toward reading and writing; (4) learners' interest and backgrounds; (5) the degree of control that learners display over language in all its forms. . . . (Category 5) requires both an abstraction (control of language) and the assigning of a value to that abstraction (degrees of control). (To do this) teachers developed sets of what we call 'markers' . . . some broad markers of control . . . (a) sense of audience when communicating; (b) use of conventions appropriate to language context; (c) use of a range of registers/genre; (d) vocabulary acquisition and use appropriate to context; (e) use of a range of grammatical options; (f) confidence in using language in different contexts; and (g) comprehension of what has been heard or read (Cambourne & Turbill, 1990, p. 343).

Summary

The uncovering of teachers' theoretical and operational beliefs and the interplay between those beliefs and teachers' actions are at the heart of this study. Results of studies on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and actions are mixed. Research is found in the literature that both supports and refutes the theory that a strong relationship exists between teachers' beliefs and their behaviors. A potential reason for these opposing views involves limitations in research design. It has been suggested that pencil-paper measures, utilizing pre-set categories of beliefs, and eliciting only theoretical beliefs may reduce the validity of the data. Another factor affecting belief-action congruency may be the level of knowledge teachers have acquired about a concept, in this instance, whole language. Finally, studies have demonstrated that factors, other than beliefs, also influence a teacher's actions within the reality of the classroom.

Research and theory on the philosophy of whole language is vast. The purpose of the review of literature in this area was to provide the reader with the understanding of whole language the researcher brought to the data collected. Whole language philosophy incorporates a naturalistic approach to the learning of language. This involves a view of language in which language is kept "whole". There are five aspects to this "wholeness": (1) the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of language are never separated, (2) language learning occurs from whole to part, (3) the "whole" of language is always more than the sum of its parts, (4) the teaching and learning of the various modes of communication occur together (are kept whole) as learning in one area will enhance learning in another, and (5) language learning is integrated with learning in the content areas.

Reading and writing are active, constructive processes individuals use to comprehend and compose meaning respectively. All natural language is functional, serving a purpose for the user and is social in nature.

Children learn the written form of language as they learned the oral form--through immersion in the language, experiencing language models, exposure to the expectation that they will become proficient language users, taking responsibility for their learning, approximating the adult standard, having the opportunity to practice the language, and being given feedback. Children learn language through its relevant and meaningful use. Learning language is developmental. The developmental stages children pass through as they learn to read and write have been observed and recorded. As children attempt to gain control over language, they make errors, which demonstrate their understanding of language. Children's desire to communicate, make sense of their world and be like adults motivates them to develop their language proficiency. Whole language teachers acknowledge the language children bring to school and use it to build subsequent language development upon.

A whole language environment is full of print, demonstrations of the processes underlying language use, and time for students to engage in purposeful, sustained involvement with language. Teachers and students establish a "community of learners", a caring environment which allows students (and teachers) to be risk-takers and collaborate together for a "common good". The children and their individual needs are at the center of the curriculum. The teacher utilizes a variety of instructional strategies, such as varied grouping, to address those needs. Parents are welcome in whole language classrooms as other members of the "community of learners".

The teacher's role is one of guide, coach, observer, supporter, facilitator, manipulator of the environment, evaluator, and continual learner. Students are seen as having ownership and responsibility for their learning. They are choice-makers and in control of their learning. The student role is one of full participant in the "community of learners", both with its rewards and responsibilities.

Evaluation is naturalistic, consistent with the way in which language is learned. The emphasis is on observing students as they are involved in every day activities of the classroom. The teacher integrates information from observation and discussions with children with knowledge of language development, children, and pedagogy to deduce students' strengths, needs and to monitor their progress. As evaluation in whole language was designed to look at behavior within the context of the natural situation, standardized testing would have no place in whole language evaluation.

Chapter 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Qualitative methods for collection and analysis of data were employed due to the descriptive nature of this study. This chapter describes the selection of teacher and student subjects, the instruments used, the data collection procedure, the pilot study, and the coding and analysis of data.

Subjects

Teachers

The selection of six grade one teachers was drawn from a list of 11 teachers, ten female and one male, given the researcher by a large, urban school system's language arts consultants. The consultants were asked to produce a list of grade one teachers who, in their opinion, are "committed" "whole language" teachers. The 11 teachers were approached by telephone in random order to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study. The list of potential subjects was narrowed to six as one teacher did not wish to participate, another first agreed, then had to withdraw due to illness, another was now teaching grade two, and the last teacher felt that her grade 1/2 combined class was not appropriate for selection of a low- and high- achieving student as the class had been formed with all high-achieving grade ones. Of the remaining seven subjects, one was randomly selected for use in the pilot study. The remaining six teachers used as subjects in the study were female. Elbaz (1981) states that "one guarantee of capturing [a] teacher's knowledge in a real way was [to choose] a teacher who was committed to her work, able to articulate her point of view, and interested in doing so" (p. 51).

Students

Teachers were asked to select, as subjects, two students from their class--one among those achieving highest in language arts and one among those achieving lowest in language arts. Teachers were also asked to ensure that the students selected were spending their first year in grade one, a member of the present class for the entire year, native-English speakers, not reading independently upon entering grade one, and relatively articulate and outgoing and therefore, hopefully willing to talk with the researcher. Teachers selected as student-subjects three boys and three girls as high-achievers and four boys and two girls as low-achievers. Harste and Burke (1977) demonstrated that when given a choice in selecting achieving students, teachers were inclined to choose those whose behavior reflected their (teachers') beliefs. One may assume that their choice of low-achieving students is based on behavior not consistent with their beliefs about good readers and writers. Conversely, Stephens and Clyde (1985, cited in Huestis, 1987), in their study on reading comprehension instruction, concluded from conversations held with students in classrooms, that students would accept the view of reading and writing presented by the teacher and work within the established context.

This study was designed using grade one students deliberately as they were experiencing their first year of exposure to formal reading instruction. This attempt to gain insight into reading/writing processes and beliefs at a relatively formative stage was undertaken in order to limit the potential influences on students' beliefs about reading and writing.

Instruments

Different studies have used a variety of techniques and instruments to measure teachers' beliefs. Pencil-paper type measures were excluded from use in this study because by their nature they restrict potential teacher responses to items on the instrument, introduce bias through the generation of statements by the researcher, and produce scores that have meaning only in comparison to those with whom the instrument was standardized (Munby, 1984). In this study, teacher and student belief data were gathered mainly through the interview techniques described below. Like Metzger (1973), this design was built on the premise that "a belief system can be learned through questioning procedures that produce and organize an inventory of assertions" (p. 37). Similarly, Gove (1981, cited in Gove, 1983) asserts that "the implicit theories of the learning to read process held by individuals can be inferred from their descriptions of their teaching behavior and the reasons they give" (p. 261). An assumption is often made that "observer reports are accurate representations of what happens in the classroom" (Burns & Koziol, 1984, p. 2) and thus, observation of subjects will elicit a "true" representation of classroom reality. In many studies, however, the training, qualifications and biases of the observer are unknown. The thinking which considers the judgement of an outside observer (complete with his/her own "baggage") more valid than that of an individual who "lives" in the situation under study is questionable. For these reasons, interviewing was selected as the predominant technique for gathering data in this study.

The principle of "triangulation" (Denzin, 1978) was utilized with three sources of teacher belief data and three sources of student belief data accumulated (see Figure 3.1). Teacher belief data came from (1) teacher interview, (2) teacher journal, and (3) student interviews. Student interviews have been included as another source of information on teacher beliefs as Rohrkemper (1984, cited in Fear et al., 1987) found that teachers' beliefs and behaviors strongly influenced students' perceptions of schooling. Burns & Koziol (1984) consider student reporting "a cost-effective alternative to observer reporting as a means for assessing the accuracy of teacher self-reports" (p. 4). Observations made and recorded on the Contact Summary Sheet by the researcher were used to confirm, disconfirm, and add to statements made by teachers in their interviews.

Student belief data came from (1) student reading and writing samples, (2) student interview, and (3) teacher interview. Denzin (1978) states that the "greater the triangulation (i.e., more), the greater the confidence in the observed findings" (p. 340).

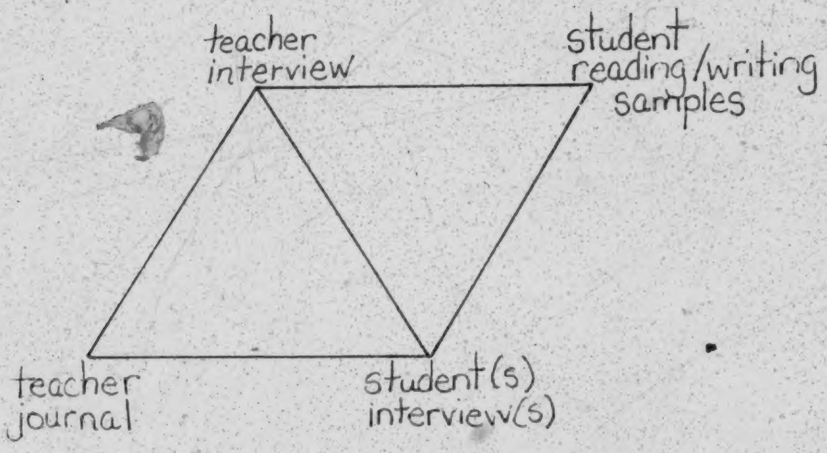
teacher interview
student reading/writing samples
teacher journal
student(s) interview(s)

Figure 3.1: Dual Triangulation Model

Contact Summary Sheet (Miles & Huberman, 1984)

This recording sheet (Appendix A), designed and used by the researcher, focused observation on descriptions of the physical characteristics of the classroom, lesson/activities observed, nature of classroom interaction, key statements about written language made by students and teachers, and concluded with follow-up questions to be asked in teacher and student interviews.

Teacher Interview Schedule

The Teacher Interview Schedule (Appendix B) was developed by the researcher to assist in ensuring that similar areas of whole language were discussed by all teachers. The questions were deliberately devised to be open-ended in order to reduce the influence of the questions on teachers' responses.

Student Interview Schedule

The Student Interview Schedule (Appendix C) was developed by the researcher to elicit information on students' reading and writing strategies, their beliefs about reading and writing, their understanding of the teacher's role and their own role in developing into proficient users of written language.

Bader Reading and Language Inventory (Bader, 1983)

This individually administered reading test measures reading levels from preprimer to twelfth grade level. Although many diagnostic tests are found within the inventory, the word recognition lists and graded passages were the only components used in this study. The inventory includes three sets of graded passages designed for different audiences. In this study, the first set of materials, designed for children, was used. The graded passages were designed to establish subjects' instructional reading level by having them read passages of increasing difficulty.

Predictable Book - The Hungry Giant (Ginn Storybox)

This book was selected for its predictable structure and completeness as a narrative.

Teacher Journals

Teachers were requested to keep a journal for four days of one week. The entries were to contain language arts activities that took place during those four days (possibly including copies of lesson plans, materials used, papers/booklets given to students, etc.), the thoughts that led to the inclusion of the activity in the teacher's program, the relationship between activities and the teacher's beliefs about whole language, and the teacher's personal reflections.

Reading Miscue Inventory (Goodman, Watson & Burke, 1987)

A modified version of the Reading Miscue Inventory (Goodman et al., 1987) was used to evaluate students' oral reading miscues in order to infer the reading strategies they utilized. Miscues at instructional level were analyzed as to their graphic and phonic similarity to the text word, syntactic and semantic acceptability with the sentence and passage and change in the author's meaning. The number of corrected and uncorrected miscues were compared to determine students' degree of monitoring .

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected from teachers and students during the months of April, May and June, 1989. The order of data collection followed at every site was observation by the researcher, interview with the teacher, followed by separate interviews with the two students. Before the commencement of any data collection, each teacher was given a scribbler to use as her journal. It was requested that the journal be sent to the researcher upon its completion.

Observation

The researcher observed one language arts "time", selected and conducted by each teacher, in order to 1) become familiar with the classroom setting (interaction, atmosphere, materials, etc.), 2) meet and develop rapport with the teacher and students, 3) take note of statements, activities, and events for probing in the follow-up interview, and 4) increase the potential of reliable findings as researchers have found that higher levels of agreement between teachers and observers occur when observations take place before teachers report about their practices (Burns & Koziol, 1984; Hardebeck, Ashbaugh, & McIntrye, 1974, cited in Burns & Koziol, 1984; Newfield, 1980, cited in Burns & Koziol, 1984). When in the classroom observing, the researcher made an effort to be as unobtrusive as possible, but followed the teacher's lead if a request for assistance was made. A Contact Summary Sheet was completed for each site visited (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Teacher Interview

Teacher interviews were private, tape-recorded sessions which took approximately one to one and one-half hours and consisted of three phases. In the first phase, general information about the teacher's professional background was gathered in order to both supply the information and ease teachers into the interview situation by having them speak on a familiar, comfortable topic--themselves. Specifically, information was gathered on each individual's teacher education, years of teaching experience and grade levels taught, factors influencing development as a whole language teacher, and professional development.

The second phase was designed to ascertain teacher's theoretical beliefs about "whole language". An eliciting heuristic technique (Black, 1969; Black & Metzger, 1969; Kay & Metzger, 1973; Metzger, 1973; Richardson-Koehler, 1988; Richardson-Koehler & Hamilton, 1988) was employed. This technique was originally designed by anthropologists to uncover the belief systems of other cultures. It involves open-ended questioning in order to elicit in a subject's "native language", statements about a particular topic (i.e., drawing out what the subjects conceive "whole language" to be). Then, using close-ended questions, the interviewer must determine the validity of her understanding of the statements elicited. The interviewer must continually be cognizant of her role and avoid imposing her "language" or "concept" of "whole language" upon subjects. She is "trained by the informant to behave linguistically or verbally in ways which the informant considers appropriate" (Black & Metzger, 1969, p. 142) and must attempt to "avoid a priori assumptions as to what are the relevant questions" (Black & Metzger, 1969, p. 158). With this concept in mind, the researcher gave each teacher an open invitation to talk about her concept of "whole language". To compensate for the limited interview time and to ensure that the various aspects of "whole language" arose, the interviewer probed, in the least restricting way possible, areas not covered in the initial discussion (e.g., How do spelling and whole language relate?).

In the third and final phase of the interview, the researcher posed questions which elicited statements about the teacher's operational beliefs. Teachers discussed how they taught reading and writing on a day-to-day basis and described their interactions involving reading and writing with the two student-subjects they had previously identified (usually identification of student-subjects arose during the observation). Throughout the interview, the researcher sought understanding of the teacher's views by checking her perceptions with the teacher and probing further in an open-ended fashion.

Student Interview

Student interviews were private, tape-recorded sessions which took approximately one to one and one-half hours. The researcher worked with each student individually, explaining to the child that she was a grade one teacher who was taking some time off from teaching to find out all the things that grade one students know about reading and writing. Students were informed that in the session they would be asked to do some reading and writing and to answer some questions about their reading and writing. The reason for the tape recorder's presence was discussed (to enable the researcher further access to what was said) and students were given the opportunity to record their voice and listen to the playback. In order to establish rapport, the researcher engaged in other atmosphere-setting conversation with students prior to beginning data collection.

Before beginning the reading component of the interview, it was explained that the researcher would be making notes on her copy of the passages to assist her in remembering how students read later on. Furthermore, students were told that if they came to a difficult word, not to worry, just do the best that they can and go on.

Reading Sample.

Students were requested to identify words in graded word lists with the purpose being to establish some indication of their appropriate placement within the graded reading passages. They, then, read a series of passages first silently and then orally. According to the directions for administration of the Bader Informal Reading Inventory (Bader, 1983), a "motivation" to activate schema was given before each passage read silently by the student. After each passage, students were asked to give a retelling of the passage and to answer comprehension questions. Oral reading samples were undertaken until an instructional reading level was established for each student.

Those students who could neither meet the independent level criteria on the preprimer word list nor meet the instructional level criteria on the preprimer passage read a predictable book, The

Hungry Giant, after it was read once by the researcher. In this situation, the researcher questioned the student about his/her familiarity with the book and was prepared to use another predictable book should The Hungry Giant be a favorite and potentially memorized text. As the student read orally, the researcher recorded miscues on a copy of the passage, which were later rechecked using the tape recording. Following the reading of passages, students were questioned about strategies observed when reading and about reading in general.

Writing Sample.

In the writing component, students were asked to write a story or on a topic of their choice. Before beginning their writing students were questioned to determine their planning strategies for writing. At the conclusion of the writing, students were asked about composing and revising strategies observed when writing and about writing in general.

Rowe and Harste (1986) state that children do possess "a great deal of metalinguistic awareness (and) many of our best insights have come from the asides made by children as they attempt reading and writing tasks" (p. 238). O'Brien (1989) has found that to improve the quality of student responses to strategy questions, it is helpful to "phrase a strategy question with reference to a specific behavior observed while the student was performing a reading task" (p. 239). Harste (1978) mentions successful interviews about reading processes with beginning grade two students. Statements made by students consistently held up over repeated probings and their oral reading process behaviors were consistent with statements made.

Pilot Study

Prior to the main study a pilot study was conducted in order to field test the interview procedures and to determine the potential of teachers and students to understand and respond to questions in the Teacher Interview Schedule and Student Interview Schedule respectively. The teacher and students used in the pilot study had little difficulty in understanding questions posed to them. In some cases word changes were made in order to clarify questions, while in others, like the question regarding the relation of the term "process" to whole language, it was decided to leave the question as originally written to ascertain if the term, so prevalent in the literature, was one understood and used by teachers. Two questions regarding the materials used in the reading and writing components of a whole language program were added to the Teacher Interview Schedule. No questions were deleted.

Coding and Analysis of Data

Teacher Data

Audiotapes of interviews were reviewed and transcribed verbatim. Subsequently, the six teacher interviews were read in two sittings to gain an initial understanding of their contents.

Interview transcripts were then reread and coded as to the type of information contained (ie. which question(s) does this statement(s) address?). One interview transcript was given to a second-reader, knowledgeable in the area of language arts, to examine and recode. The researcher and second-reader discussed any discrepancies or issues that arose and the researcher reread and recoded all transcripts.

Teacher journals were coded in a similar manner, although little information on theoretical beliefs was forthcoming as the journals generally reported on only teacher practices and student activities.

After coding and reviewing each teacher's interview data, categories of responses to questions emerged. These categories were recorded on individual checklist matrices (Miles & Huberman,1984) pertaining to the various aspects of whole language. These were sub-divided into three large categories: beliefs about the nature of whole language, beliefs about reading, and beliefs about writing. This type of analysis allowed the researcher to look at similarities and differences among teachers as well as the degree of consistency between teacher beliefs and whole language philosophy, according to the literature reviewed. Highlights of the same information was provided, as well, in a prose description of each teacher, to allow for greater understanding of individual teachers through an enriched profile.

A similar method of analysis was used to supply, in tabular form, data on teacher's beliefs about whole language for high- and low-achieving students.

Data collected from teacher journals were compared with other data. Data which supported other data (ie. repetitious) were disregarded, new data were added to already existing tables, while data inconsistent with that previously analyzed were noted and either added to existing tables or discussed in the section on congruence of teachers' beliefs and actions.

Students' Oral Reading Miscues

Miscues produced by students during their oral reading at instructional level were analyzed to assess the extent to which students relied on print-based or meaning-based cues when reading. To this end, a modified version of the Miscue Analysis Procedure I Coding Form (Goodman et al., 1987) (Appendix D) was used to code and analyze students' miscues according to graphic similarity, phonic similarity, syntactic acceptability, and semantic acceptability. Within each category miscues were scored in relation to the degree of similarity or acceptance with the text: Y--the miscue is similar or acceptable, P-- the miscue is partially similar or acceptable, N-- the miscue is not similar or acceptable. The category of "meaning change", used to note change in the author's intended meaning created by a miscue was included as well. Miscues in this category were coded Y if meaning was altered substantially, P if there was a partial change in meaning, and N if no change occurred as a result of the miscue. All miscues which occurred at instructional level, to a maximum of ten, were analyzed for each student.

Graphic and Phonic Similarity.

These similarities depend upon the degree of letter and sound congruence between the miscue and the text word. These categories determine the degree to which a student utilized the graphic and phonic features of text. Coding miscues involves judging the extent of similarity according to the following criteria.

Y--half or more of the letters (graphic) or sounds (phonic) in the text word are represented in the miscue.

P--less than half but at least one letter (graphic) or one sound (phonic) in the text word is represented in the miscue.

N--The text word and miscue do not contain any of the same letters (graphic) or sounds (phonic)

Syntactic Acceptability.

This category determines the degree to which a student utilized his/her knowledge of language to predict words. Coding miscues involves judging the extent of acceptability according to the following criteria.

Y--the miscue forms a sentence which is grammatically correct and is acceptable in relation to prior and subsequent sentences in the passage.

P--the miscue forms a sentence which is grammatically correct but not acceptable in relation to prior and subsequent sentences in the passage (e.g. change in tense) OR the miscue forms a sentence which is grammatically correct only with the prior or subsequent sentence portion.

N--the miscue forms a sentence which is grammatically incorrect.

Semantic Acceptability.

This category determines the degree to which a student utilized meaning to predict words. Coding miscues involves judging the extent of acceptability according to the following criteria.

Y--the miscue forms a sentence which is meaningful and is acceptable in relation to prior and subsequent sentences in the passage.

P--the miscue forms a sentence which is meaningful but not acceptable in relation to prior and subsequent sentences in the passage OR the miscue forms a sentence which is meaningful only with the prior or subsequent sentence portion.

N--the miscue forms a sentence which is not meaningful.

Meaning Change.

This category determines the degree to which a reader's miscue changed the intended meaning of the author. Coding miscues involves judging the extent of the change according to the following criteria.

Y--the miscue is meaningless OR there is an extensive change in the meaning the author intended.

P--the miscue creates a minimal change in meaning which does not alter the author's basic intent.

N--the miscue creates no change in the author's meaning.

Students' Spelling Errors

Spelling errors were analyzed to detect how students were able to process words into graphic cues. This involved determination of their reliance on the sounds of words and/or their print knowledge and visual memory (Malicky, 1987). To this end, a Spelling Error Coding Form (Appendix E) was developed to analyze students' spelling errors according to the type of strategy the student used which resulted in the error. All spelling errors to a maximum of 20 were analyzed for each student.

Sound-based strategy.

Errors coded as students demonstrating a sound-based strategy included those words in which the predominant strategy was to use letters representing phonemes in the spoken word. This included words in which

1) the sound and letter name and target phoneme are similar
   (e.g. PLAS for place)
2) place or articulation in the mouth is similar (vowel alternations)
   (e.g. HEM for him)
3) representation of back glide
   (e.g. SOW for so)
4) affrication
   (e.g. CHRAN for train)
5) preconsonantal nasals were omitted
   (e.g. WAT for want)
6) syllabic segments represented by single letter (consonants r, l, s, m, and n) when no evidence supporting understanding of this concept is present
   (e.g. MOTHR for mother)
7) speech variants
   (e.g. WERES for worse)

8) phonic-based vowel alternations (elementary letter-sound associations)
   (e.g. CUD for could)
9) phonic-based consonant alternations
   (e.g. POPCICL for popsicle)

Print-based strategy.

Errors coded as students demonstrating a print-based strategy included those words in which the predominant strategy was to use memory images or generalizations of spelling rules. This included words in which

1) visual images were inverted (adjacent letters)
   (e.g. A WHIEL for awhile)
2) visual images were transposed (nonadjacent letters)
   (e.g. SNASCK for snacks)
3) one letter of a visual image was omitted (omission not due to sound-based strategy)
   (e.g. SAY for stay)
4) substitution in a visual image occurred (not sound alternates)
   (e.g. COUGH for could)
5) addition in a visual image occurred
   (e.g. JUMMPED for jumped)
6) whole word errors (including recognizable words in spellings)
   (e.g. PARASHOOT for parachute)

7) spelling generalizations were misapplied
(e.g. SUTE-CASE for suitcase)

Errors were coded both as use of print-based and sound-based strategies if two or more errors, which indicated use of both types of strategies by the student, were involved in the misspelling.

No predominant strategy.

Errors which did not meet the above criteria and thus were not classifiable were recorded in a third category as indicating no predominant strategy.

(e.g. WSA for his)

Interrater Reliability

Twenty miscues and 20 spelling errors were analyzed by another rater to establish interrater reliability. The percentage of agreement regarding the classification of oral reading errors in the five miscue analysis categories (graphic similarity, phonic similarity, syntactic acceptability, semantic acceptability, and meaning change) ranged from 95 to 100. The percent agreement determined with respect to classification of spelling errors was 91.

Student Interviews

Audiotapes of interviews were reviewed and transcribed verbatim. The 12 student interviews were then read in three sittings to gain an initial understanding of their contents. Interview transcripts were then reread and coded as to the type of information contained (ie. which question(s) does this statement(s) address?).

After coding and reviewing each student's interview data, categories of responses to questions emerged. These categories were recorded on a checklist matrix (Miles & Huberman,1984) involving students' beliefs about the teacher and student role in reading and writing. These categories were compared to each of the following:

1) The student's actual reading and writing strategies observed as they read and wrote.

2) Their teacher's beliefs about whole language (including reading and writing) and beliefs about using whole language with high- and low- achievers.

Summary

Six grade one, self-professed whole language teachers were selected from 11 potential subjects identified by language arts consultants of a large, urban school district. Each teacher-subject selected a high- and low-achiever from their classroom as student-subjects.

Data were collected mainly through interviewing techniques. Prior to any interviewing, the researcher observed one teacher-selected language arts "time" in each classroom. Teacher interviews involved using open-ended questioning to elicit each teacher's theoretical and operational beliefs about whole language, focusing on reading and writing. Student interviews consisted of collecting reading and writing samples, discussing strategies observed, and eliciting each student's beliefs about reading and writing. Teachers kept a journal recording language activities and reflections on those activities for four days of one week.

Teacher interview and journal data were coded, categorized , and tabulated. The tables enabled data on teachers' beliefs about whole language to be compared and contrasted. Further data on teacher actions allowed for determination of the consistency or inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and actions.

Students' oral reading miscues were recorded and analyzed using a modified version of the Miscue Analysis Procedure I Coding Form (Goodman et al., 1987) to determine the reading processes engaged in by the student when identifying words in context at his/her instructional reading level. Spelling errors produced in the writing sample were analyzed to determine the type of strategy (sound-based or print-based) used by the student when encoding words. Student interview data were coded and categorized. It was used to provide information about students' beliefs about reading and writing and to indicate the consistency or inconsistency between 1) students' beliefs and actions and 2) teachers' beliefs and students' beliefs. The results of the analysis and interpretation of the data are found in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4

TEACHERS' BACKGROUNDS AND BELIEFS REGARDING WHOLE LANGUAGE

This chapter presents the results of the findings on teachers' backgrounds and beliefs about whole language under three sections. The first section details each teacher's educational and professional background, including information regarding teacher education, years and type of teaching experience, and influences on development as a whole language teacher. The second section summarizes and discusses teachers' beliefs about the nature of whole language, then focuses in on beliefs about reading and writing. To aid clarity, the findings for each question are presented in tabular form, followed by a summary which provides examples and assistance in interpreting the findings. The third section offers a descriptive view of each teacher in prose form, to aid in gaining a profile of individual teacher's beliefs.

Part 1: Teachers' Backgrounds

Table 4.1
Teachers' Backgrounds

Name	Teacher Education	Years of Experience	Div I/II Experience	Wh. Lang. Support Group	Influences on development as whole lang. teacher
Shelly	B.Ed (Generalist/ lang. arts minor)	4 (includes year as intern)	all Div I	Yes*	Univ. courses professional reading 1st teaching assignment
Leah	B.A. (Sociology) B.Ed. (General)	17	more Div I (last 10 years)	Yes*	conferences Ethel Buchanan summer workshop working with the support group For the Love of Reading
Diane	B.Ed (ECE/Eng)	7	all Div I (this is first year at gr. 1)	No	teaching at a wh. lang. school --had to become wh. lang. teacher reading articles

Irene	B.Ed (ECE/Art/ Lang. Arts)	7	mainly Div I	No	workshops - McCracken's - Bill Martin professional reading teacher intervisitation previous experience teaching (prior to B. Ed.) working with - Jane Hansen - Donald Graves
Janet	1 yr teacher training summer & night courses to finish B.Ed (Fr) & Grad Dip (ECE)	15	almost all Div I	Yes**	colleagues Ethel Buchanan summer workshop attends district inservices
Karen	2 yrs teacher college summer & evening courses to complete B.Ed	22	slightly more time in Div II	Yes**	colleagues CEL Conference workshops - Jane Hansen - Bill Martin *I Can Read* *For the Love of Reading*

*/** indicate belonging to the same support group

All six teachers involved in the study reported attainment of bachelor of education degrees. In addition, one teacher had earned a bachelor of arts degree and another a graduate diploma. The years of teaching experience ranged from 4 to 22 and the average number of years was 12. Two teachers had taught only at the Division I level (grades K-3), three teachers had some experience at Division II (grades 4-6), and one teacher had spent the majority of her teaching career in Division II. Two of the six teachers did not belong to any whole language support group. The four remaining teachers were divided between two different groups. There was great variability in those factors acknowledged by teachers as having had an influence on their development as whole language teachers. Inservices, workshops, professional reading, and colleagues were those most frequently mentioned.

Part 2: Teachers' Beliefs About Whole Language

Teachers' beliefs about whole language are presented on the following pages in order to address the research questions regarding teachers' theoretical and operational beliefs about whole language as well as the extent to which these beliefs are similar between and among teachers and to those described in the literature. For each question, teachers' individual responses (indicated by initial) have been summarized and tabulated to assist in this comparison.

Teachers' Beliefs About the Nature of Whole Language

Table 4.2

Teachers' Beliefs about the "Whole" in Whole Language

When you think of whole language, what does the word "whole" mean to you?

Descriptor	Teachers
integration of language arts strands	S,L,D,I,J,K
language is kept whole and can then be separated into parts/skills embedded within whole texts	S,L,I,K
language arts is integrated with other curricular areas	S,D,I
looking at the "whole" child--learning taking place physically, emotionally, etc.	L,D,I
children using real language	S,K
students view reading as relevant/purposeful	S,K
whole language starts with/involves whole ideas, stories and poems	L,D
helping all students in the classroom, not just a few who learn a certain way	D
not over-analyzing text--keeping a "love of language language of whole pieces"	I

using all one's skills and facilities to become a reader	I
linking what is highlighted in the classroom to real reading and writing experiences (ie. that's why we do that)	K
language is presented in a supportive context	K

All teachers reported equating the word "whole" with integration of the strands of language arts. Surprisingly, only four out of the six mentioned language being learned whole to part and even those that did had some difficulty articulating the idea. For example, Shelly stated it "really just means wholistic or whole, a sum total of everything they need to learn is all presented as a large group and then they can separate it from there if need be". Only half of the teachers mentioned the role of language in the content areas. Interestingly, no teachers discussed the importance of the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of language remaining intact, with the possible exception of Karen who spoke of language being presented in a supportive context. Shelly and Karen may have had this notion in mind when they discussed children using real language.

Table 4.3

Teachers' Beliefs about the Focus of a Whole Language Program

Tell about the focus of a whole language program.

Descriptor	Teachers
child-centered	S,L,D,I,J,K
students reading, writing, listening, speaking	S,L
development of each student	S,I
using language to pursue enjoyment and learning	I

All teachers view the child as being the focus of a language arts program. Shelly sees the students as having a very active role in the development of themes and activities in the classroom. She acknowledges, "for the first while when I taught I really chose things that I was comfortable with but I'm finally to the point now where I will branch off if (students are) interested". Leah's concept of a child-focus is beginning "with the children--where they're at and is based on their interests and on what they can do and want to do". Diane's concern is with the importance of a child's self-esteem. She feels that a child-centered program helps each child to feel successful. Irene has a double, yet interrelated focus of the child and his/her development. Janet has difficulty elaborating on her definition of child-centered. She tries to get the kids interested and "do things they are involved in, one way or another". Karen views whole language as using children's experiences and language to make it more meaningful for them. She sees the value in maintaining a high level of interest for the students. While all teachers view a whole language program as being child-centered, there is considerable variation as to what this term means. Also, as demonstrated in chapter 5, teachers use of the term "child-centered" was not always reflected in their actions.

Table 4.4

Teachers' Beliefs about the Relationship between Whole Language and Other Curricular Areas

How does whole language relate to other aspects of the curriculum?

Descriptor	Teachers
material involving curricular areas are pulled in around a theme	S,L,D,I,J,K
language arts is addressed all day	S,L,I,K
whole language philosophy permeates the entire school day/changed the way other subjects are taught	S
literature used as a tool for integration of language arts with other subject areas	L
language arts skills are needed in curricular areas	I

All teachers use themes to some extent in their classrooms. Some of these themes are more closely linked to grade one content area curriculum than others (e.g. selecting the theme of "family", a mandated social studies "topic" for grade one as opposed to "teddy bears"). Four out of six teachers commented that language arts learning is something that continues throughout the school day. While four teachers indicated that language arts permeates the school day, only one referred to helping children learn to read and write in the different curricular areas and the ways in which that might differ from how reading and writing are dealt with during language arts "time".

Table 4.5

Teachers' Beliefs about the Parents' Role in a Whole Language Program

What role do parents have in a whole language program?

Descriptor	Teachers
assistance in classroom with students/tasks (e.g. publishing)	S,L,D,I,J,K
support read-at-home program/read with their children	S,L,D,I,J,K
should/need to have an understanding of program/philosophy	S,L,D,K
important/"big" role	S,D,I
provide opportunities for children to be involved in oral and written language activities	D,J
ensure students complete homework	L,K
assist own children with writing ideas	S

be supportive of child's attempts at written and spoken language	L
remain informed regarding the happenings of the class	L
write to their children	L
join in celebrations of children's writing	L
depends upon the parent(s)	D
support the school/home-school partnership	I
be positive language models for children/demonstrate "care" for books	K

All six teachers see the parental role in a whole language program as involving parental assistance in the classroom and reading to and with their children at home. Janet wrote in her journal, "An integral part of a whole language classroom is the nightly take home reading all children must/should do to experience success in reading. Parents need to be a very important spoke in the whole language wheel". Four out of six mentioned the importance of parent's understanding the language arts program in place in the classroom. There was considerable variability on other roles for parents in a whole language program.

Table 4.6

Teachers' Beliefs about "Process" and Whole Language

What does the term "process" mean to you with respect to whole language?

Descriptor	Teachers
students are continually in the process of learning/ developing	S,L,D
there is a process to reading and a process to writing and stages readers go through in the process	S
important to know the stage of development a student is at in order to extend their learning	L
final product is not as important as what students did to get there	L
teachers observe the types of strategies students are utilizing as they read and write	L
Graves' philosophy--writing to learn	I
language arts components (e.g. listening)--those processes used to discover the whole	J

Overall, teachers did not seem familiar with the use of the term "process" in conjunction with whole language. Tabulation of responses to this question were limited to those responses immediately following the question as posed initially to teachers. Teachers' beliefs about process, as it specifically relates to reading and writing are presented in those sections. One teacher was unable to respond to the question, stating "I really don't understand what you're referring to". Three teachers mentioned the developmental aspect of learning. Shelly and Leah referred to the existence of "process" in both reading and writing but did not elaborate. Irene discussed her understanding of Graves' work which centered on students use of writing to explore a topic (learn). She did not discuss Graves' writing process/authoring cycle, except to mention that students share and revise. Overall, the responses to this question tended to be vague and rambling. Possible reasons for this include unfamiliarity with the term or knowledge of this aspect operating at a tacit level in these teachers. This is surprising in light of the prevalence of this term in the whole language literature.

Table 4.7

Teachers' Beliefs about Children's Developing Competency in Written Language

What beliefs do whole language teachers usually possess about how young children are able to develop competency in written language?

Descriptor	Teachers
students learn to do by doing/active involvement/ practice, including guided practice	S,L,D,I,J,K
students memorize/become familiar with text prior to seeing it in print so they understand what the marks on the paper denote and to increase their chance of reading successfully	L,J,K

weaker students can learn from more knowledgeable ones	L,D,K
students pick up on reading when exposed to good literature	S,I,K
students progress through known stages of writing development	S,D
each child is an individual and progresses at his/her own rate	S,K
spelling development is enhanced if children are encouraged to spell independently	S,L
writing should be part of students' routine	S,I
discussion is important to promote comprehension	S,L
to motivate students, base activities on their interests	S,L
students need opportunities to develop story schema	S,L
students should become aware of the processes of reading and writing (metacognition)	L,K
learning language is developmental	L,J
students learn skills within meaningful contexts	L,K
teach to students' varied learning styles/modes	D,I
finding and circling letters/words in a text is helpful/highlights awareness	L,D
copying print promotes writing development	J,K

structured writing precedes "free" writing--where students select topic, form, and audience	S
students use whatever knowledge they have (about writing or reading) immediately upon entering school to write and read	L
students learn the strategies that skilled readers and writers use from teacher modeling	L
students will make mistakes as they learn to use written language	L
when skills, such as phonics are highlighted in isolation, they then are immediately placed into reading and writing contexts	L
teachers support students when reading by reading with them, to them, or suggesting easier material	L
students learn when they have a purpose for what they are doing	L
low-achieving students need more phonics, more help, more crutches than the average or above average child	D
children who do not have literacy opportunities at home benefit from individual attention at school with parent volunteers--on letter recognition, reading, and comprehension	D
students benefit from cross-ability groupings except during reading instruction	D

because students arrive in a classroom at different levels, they require a variety of activities	I
students should have opportunities to share/help one another	I
the use of context clues is encouraged	J
students don't always notice aspects of written language independently and therefore, the teacher needs to highlight them	J
repetition of vocabulary in reading texts is important	J
teachers need to repeat the introduction of written language concepts, such as punctuation	J
children can learn written language	J
begin instruction with familiar, meaningful language--the children's own	K
students are provided with print in supportive contexts (e.g. with pictures accompanying text)	K
McCracken's spelling program used as starting point for familiarizing students with the sounds of the alphabet so writing can begin	K
students can adapt the ideas of others to use in their writing	K
students need a variety of strategies to use when faced with a difficulty such as not knowing how to spell a word	K

students need both directed and free writing time in order to develop vocabulary	K

All six teachers noted the belief of students' active involvement in reading and writing--the idea that students "learn to read by reading and write by writing". Interestingly, descriptions of stages of reading and writing development were not forthcoming by all teachers, although Leah and Karen mentioned student memorization of text as a strategy. Shelly and Diane mentioned stages of writing development without discussing specifics, and Leah and Janet reported the developmental aspect of language. Little attention was paid to the development of comprehension (ie. relating background knowledge to text information), although Shelly and Leah highlighted group discussions as necessary to encourage comprehension and reported a need for development of students' sense of story. Developing students' metacognitive abilities was another area reported by Leah and Karen as assisting in students' move toward competency in written language, while Leah, Diane, Irene, and Karen stated the importance of students helping one another.

Many responses to this question were fully or partially inconsistent with whole language philosophy as described in the literature. In the area of writing, both Shelly and Karen feel it is necessary to structure certain experiences before students are allowed to write. Shelly sees structured writing as a necessary prelude to free writing, while Karen feels that the sounds of the alphabet must be taught through the McCracken program before students are able to write. Janet and Karen view the copying of print as promoting writing development. Diane sees homogeneous groupings as beneficial to reading instruction, while cross-ability groupings are useful in other situations as children can assist one another. Leah disclosed that while she teaches phonics in isolation, she subsequently puts it back into a context. The literature reviewed sees phonics teaching as taking place *within* a context, not merely being placed in one after the fact. Leah and Diane involve their students in activities where letters or words beginning with a particular letter are circled in a text. While this activity may highlight awareness of a letter, there is no purpose for students in relation to "real" reading or writing. Janet mentioned repetition of vocabulary in reading texts as being important. While it is true that a sight word vocabulary is developed through repetition of words, this repetition naturally occurs when texts remain natural although predictable. Janet revealed a dislike of the Impressions reading series (which includes predictable texts) due to a lack of repetition in vocabulary and thus, it might be assumed that she is advocating for a stricter control of vocabulary than that currently supported by whole language philosophy.

Table 4.8

Teachers' Beliefs about an Environment Conducive to Learning

What type of environment or conditions are conducive to a child's learning? (especially language learning)

Descriptor	Teachers
warm, caring, happy, comfortable, non-threatening, secure atmosphere where students can be risk-takers	S,L,D,J,K
immersion in oral and written language	S,D,I,J,K
child-centered (feels involved/a part of the learning/environment)	S,D,I,K
students help each other/work together	L,D,J,K
mistakes are acceptable/students are not criticized	S,L,D
accessible reading and writing materials	S,L,D
students are actively involved in their learning	S,L,J
students use/experiment with language	L,D,J
students experience success/build self-confidence	D,I,K
one-on-one attention is beneficial/mini-conferencing	S,L
important for teacher to model reading and writing behavior	S,L
enhancement of students' self-esteem	S,D

varying activities to address students' interests	S,K
discussions about real-life authors/author studies	S
activities change to suit students' attention spans	S
where learning is integrated (e.g. science with language arts)	S
teachers respond to students' needs	S
on-task behavior	S
parental involvement in their children's reading and writing	S
a caring, helpful teacher	S
established procedures/routines	S
accept what students are capable of and encourage them to do more	L
knowledgeable teachers who know where each student is and the next step for that student	L
allowing students choice	L
flexible environment that is still highly structured	I
books should be available to children at both home and school	I
develop a love of reading and writing	I

classroom space is organized for different activities and interactions (e.g. quiet spaces, sharing spaces)	I
having the same students for 2 consecutive years	J
a teacher who believes that students "can"	J
ability groupings which enable low-achieving readers not to be shown up by better readers	K
students don't read in front of the entire class to protect the self-esteem of low-achieving students	K

Responses to this question varied depending upon whether or not the teacher interpreted the question globally or related it specifically to the learning of language, or both. The image of a warm, safe, and caring classroom was reported by five of the six teachers. Five teachers also pointed out the importance of the quantity of talk, reading, and writing in the classroom, emphasizing the characteristic of immersion in language. Students feeling a part of their classroom environment and a part of their learning, and allowing children to help one another was reported by four teachers. Half of the six teachers commented on the importance of having accessible materials, allowing children to experiment and make mistakes while structuring for student success, and children being actively involved in their learning.

Table 4.9

Teachers' Beliefs about the Ideal Whole Language Environment

What kind of environment or conditions would assist you in having the whole language program that you want?

Descriptor	Teachers
more materials at students' level	L,D,I,J
all bulletin board walls/tackboard/lots of wall space	S,I,K
furniture -- tables	I,J,K
supportive administrator	S,I
no bells/flexible timetable	S,I
small class sizes	S,D
understanding/support of program by parents and other concerned adults	L,I
additional adult help in the classroom/parents working with students	D,I
storage for materials	I,K
more space/bigger classroom	S
colleagues following same type of program	L
more help for students who are not in the "mainstream" (high- and low-achievers)	D

in-class video camera for conferencing and drama	I
lift curriculum restraints	J
cooperative team planning with another teacher	K
carpeted classroom	K
big bookcase	K
space for a listening center(s)	K

Many of the suggestions the teachers had regarding the changes in their current conditions and environments centered on physical changes in the classroom, such as replacing desks with tables, increasing classroom space, room for displaying children's work on walls, the addition of storage units, carpet, bookcases, and materials. Other responses involved people issues such as supportive administrators and parents, teachers of the same philosophy working together, and a decrease in the teacher/student ratio. Diane's request for assistance with high- and low-achieving students may or may not be consistent with whole language theory depending on her intent. Whole language acknowledges that children are individuals and as such develop at their own rate. Whole language philosophy believes in taking the child where s/he is and helping him/her to develop onward from that point, regardless of the child's "level" of understanding.

Table 4.10

Teachers' Beliefs about Evaluation

How is evaluation usually handled in a whole language program?

Descriptor	Teachers
analyzing samples of students' work (portfolios/tapings)	S,L,D,I,K
through daily observation of students	S,L,D,K
miscue analysis/listening to kids read (and how)	L,D,J,K
publisher tests	S,L,D
share information with/ demonstrate growth to parents	S,I
use students' response to word lists to demonstrate student's increasing sight word vocabulary	I,K
when evaluating writing, looks at content, word choice and written language conventions	L
assess to facilitate instruction	I
anecdotal records	D
concern about "missing something" by relying on naturalistic evaluation methods rather than more objective/standard methods	D
checklists	K

resource room teacher does individual testing with students to gain knowledge of student's book knowledge and reading ability	K

Responses to this question tended to be brief with all teachers focusing on the "how" of evaluation. Only Irene touched on a goal of evaluation--to assist in planning instruction. Five of the six teachers reported analysis of students' work as being one method of evaluation. Interestingly, while evaluation of students as they were involved in the reading process was specifically mentioned by four teachers, no teacher reported observing specifically for the purpose of assessing students' abilities at the various stages of the writing process, although four teachers did report "general" daily observation of students. This could lead to the conclusion that these teachers still focus more on "product" than "process", at least when evaluating writing; a behavior inconsistent with whole language philosophy. Also, there was no mention made of assessment of comprehension. Three of the teachers use publisher made tests. Of those three, one cited pressures from parents and another, pressures from the district in which she taught, to use such tests. Shelly feels that she doesn't use tests "as an evaluation tool really. They mostly measure growth for me". According to the literature, standardized tests are not consistent with whole language evaluation philosophy. Irene and Karen use word lists to keep a running record of students' developing sight vocabulary. This behavior is inconsistent with whole language philosophy which promotes keeping evaluation within the context of "real" reading situations where the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of language are not separated.

Teacher's Beliefs About Reading

Table 4.11

Teachers' Beliefs about the Goal of the Reading Component

What is the overall goal of the reading component of a whole language program?

Descriptor	Teachers
students enjoy/love reading	S,L,D,I,J
students comprehend what they read	S,L,J,K
students become independent readers	S,L,D
students learn to read	D,K
students want to read	S,I
students feel "like a reader"	S

Responses to this question fall into two categories, those that deal with affect and those dealing with ability. Four teachers--Shelly, Leah, Diane, and Janet included both aspects in their responses. Irene mentioned only an affective goal, while Karen discussed only the ability aspect. Although Diane acknowledges the existence of affective goals she diminishes their importance by commenting that while she values a literate society and thus believes that learning to read is "most important . . . I know, too, to enjoy language and all of those flowery things but I think the basic one is that they learn to read". She blames parental pressure for her acceptance of this stance.

Table 4.12

Teachers' Beliefs about the Most Important Aspect of the Reading Component

What is the most important aspect of the reading component of a whole language program?

Descriptor	Teachers
students read daily/quantity time	S,I
allowing students self-selection of reading material	L,I
having a variety of reading material available	L,J
students have the opportunity to share/discuss what they read	L,I
students are read stories daily	S
promoting interest in reading	L
students read relevant purposeful material	L
students have the ability to read	D

love of literature	I
students become risk-takers	J
children use context clues	J
students comprehend what they read	K

The most striking feature of the responses to this question is variability. The greatest number of teachers using the same descriptor was two. That occurred on four occasions, with the responses "time to read daily", "students self-selecting material", "having a variety of reading materials available", and "students have the opportunity to share/discuss what they read". Diane and Karen seemed to interpret the question as the goal of reading instruction rather than the part of one's reading program that is most crucial.

Table 4.13

Teachers' Beliefs about Reading Materials

What materials form the basis of the reading component of your language arts program?

Descriptor	Teachers
library books/literature	S,L,D,I,J,K
poetry/rhymes	S,L,D,I,J,K
daily newsletter/message (often used as a cloze or minimal cues activity)	S,L,D,I,J,K

pocket chart cards/reference word lists	S,L,D,I,J,K
songs	S,L,D,J,K
publisher anthologies/readers	S,L,D,J,K
big books	S,L,I,J,K
informational books	S,L,I,K
theme material	S,D,I,K
predictable/pattern books	L,D,I,K
students' published books	S,I,J
students' writing folders/books	D,I,K
students' home library books/others that students bring to class	L,D,I
I Can Read/Poem book (collections of songs, poems, chart stories)	S,L,I
magazines	I,D,K
books with tapes	L,D,K
word lists	S,K
newspaper articles	D,J
tell and show books	I,K

games	S
"special student" booklet	S
finger puppets (retellings)	S
action cards (used in gym)	L
teacher-made books	L
comic books	D
teacher's personal library	D
class newsletter/newspaper	D
whole class books/chart stories	I
workbook pages	J

Literature, poetry and rhymes, a daily newsletter or morning message, charts, and reference words were reported by all teachers as reading materials found in their whole language program. Karen views literature as being "very crucial, you can't run the program without good literature". Only Leah and Irene reported use of informational material, while the researcher noted its presence in Shelly's and Karen's classrooms. The term "literature", however, has different meanings to individuals and some teachers in the study may have felt that their reporting of "literature" included factual material. Others may have felt that non-narrative texts do not differ enough from narrative texts to warrant mentioning. While big books were only mentioned by one teacher in the course of the interview, the researcher observed their presence in four other classrooms. Since these big books tend to contain literature or poetry, teachers may have considered the reporting of them redundant.

Interestingly five of the teachers still use a publisher reading series, predominantly the Impressions (Holt) series. Use of the series ranged from selections being pulled in around themes, to use in pull-out or at-home reading programs, to a more central role when students were grouped for reading instruction.

A great deal of variety in reading materials is obvious in responses given by teachers. All of the materials mentioned, with the exception of the word lists and workbooks, are "real" reading materials and thus could be consistent with a whole language philosophy if used appropriately. It is interesting to note that Reg. (high-achieving student), not Shelly, reported the use of word lists as "homework" from his teacher.

Table 4.14

Teachers' Beliefs about "Process" and Reading

What does the term "process" mean to you with respect to whole language? (reading emphasis)

Descriptor	Teachers
children continually developing (the process of learning)	S,L,D
focus on process over product	L

as students are reading they have various strategies they can use to assist in word identification	L
students look for meaning--read and guess words that make sense, verifying guesses with print information	L
reading-writing connection--reading literature helps students to analyze characteristics of writing/language of stories and use them in their own writing	I
try to figure out an unrecognized word from context, then move on to looking at a smaller part of it (e.g. initial sound)	I
students should guess/predict what words are	J
students think ahead and guess what those words are going to be	K

Two teachers were unable to make any response to this question when asked directly. Janet thinks of "process" as referring to reading but that ". . . it's more in my head. I think it's something, it's there but I can't, I can't say". Karen reported that the term didn't have meaning for her. Interestingly, when Janet was responding to the question regarding her interpretation of a situation where a child miscues, she stated that "They're not using the *process* [emphasis added], not guessing, predicting what it could be . . .". When discussing the teaching and learning that comes out of her morning message in her initial discussion of whole language, Karen mentioned an aspect of reading process, saying that while development of certain skills were very important in the morning message experience, it is "really important for (students) to start to think ahead and guess what those words are going to be".

Leah and Irene demonstrate the greatest understanding among the six teachers of reading process, but it remains incomplete. Leah's description of the strategies students need to learn to utilize if faced with a word they don't recognize is "They can read ahead and see if they can figure out what makes sense. They can make a good guess. They can look at the letters and see if they correspond to their guess. They can just skip it. They can ask somebody". Irene's understanding that students can attempt to use context and analysis of letters was forthcoming in response to a question on phonics and not repeated in relation to "process". Shelly's and Diane's views are restricted to the developmental stages of reading that children progress through as they mature and gain experience.

Table 4.15

Teachers' Beliefs about the Relationship between Word Recognition and Comprehension

What is the relationship between word recognition and comprehension?

Descriptor	Teachers
meaning remains the focus/comprehension is the goal (understanding what is read is more important than correct identification of each word)	S,L,D,J,K

need sight words in order to comprehend	S,D,K
some students can read (identify) words but not comprehend	L,J,K
high frequency words taught first	S
comprehension assisted by talking about the story	L
"kids have to first learn to recognize the words and then be able to put them together to make sense of them"	D
identification of all words in a passage is not necessary for comprehension to occur	I
meaning of unrecognized word(s) may be derived from surrounding context	I
listening comprehension may occur without any ability to recognize (read) words	J

Five of the teachers explicitly stated that meaning or comprehension is central to reading. Shelly, Diane, and Karen believe that a certain amount of sight words are needed to enable a reader to concentrate on meaning rather than using all of his/her attention to identify words. Leah, Janet, and Karen see that there is more to comprehension than identifying words, sighting those students who can "read" but not comprehend. Irene acknowledges that comprehension of a text can occur even if all words are not correctly identified, while the meaning for some such words may be derived from context. Diane's response that students must learn to recognize words before putting them together and making sense of them is inconsistent with the whole language belief that language learning occurs while students are actively engaged in purposeful language activities. Karen uses her view that she's "more interested in what's that sentence telling you and what does it mean than what each word in it says" to support the use of reading "whole" units of meaning, such as "a whole sentence and not a part of a sentence".

Table 4.16

Teachers' Response to Students' Oral Reading Miscues

When reading and a child stumbles or doesn't know a word, how do you interpret this within a whole language philosophy?

Descriptor	Teachers
miscues that preserve meaning are not of concern	S,L,D,J
teacher should help the student to develop monitoring strategies by asking questions such as, does that sentence make sense?/what word would make sense in there; then check the letters	S,L,I,J
telling students a word is acceptable	S,L,J,K
teachers should remind students of strategies such as look at the picture, go back and reread	D,K
response to miscues depends upon the fluency of the reader	D

ask students what they are going to do now	I
preserve students self-esteem/tell them not to worry	J
students aren't guessing and predicting	J

While all of the teachers described their attempts to help students develop strategies for those times they face an unrecognized word, two of the teachers appear to create dependence as the teacher pinpoints the strategy to be used in a particular situation. For example, Diane stated ". . . let's say today when they were reading that word, 'chick' and they couldn't remember. It would be 'go back to the title' (the title contained the word 'chick')". Karen's prompts for students depends on the particular word they are having difficulty with--"If it's a word that they can sound out, I would try and encourage them to sound it out, if it is a word that is in the pictures I would try and say all right, that clue is in the picture".

Four teachers presented the idea of telling students unknown words. Shelly tells students the word, especially early in the year because "I want them to know that they don't have to struggle over every word and it's more important for them to understand what they're reading". Leah gives students words as she "wants them to get the meaning of what they are reading and enjoy it as a process and not be bogged down every other word".

Four teachers suggested that if miscues preserve meaning they are not a concern and do not necessarily need to be corrected. Karen's view on this aspect changes with the situation. She corrects a student who has made a miscue that doesn't change the meaning when reading in a large group but "might not even comment on that" when reading individually with that student. In the large group she acknowledges that it was a good guess, because "it fits in and it makes sense and it looks like that word" and then "make them look and see why it couldn't be". Karen believes that the "idea" is the most important thing and that proficient adult readers make miscues as they read as well. Regardless, she feels that it is important to model exact identification of words, a view inconsistent with the whole language belief of meaning being the ultimate reading goal.

Shelly believes that often the student knows the word but makes an error because s/he is "involved in doing the reading and that's the most important thing". She admits that she catches herself saying "sound it out" and believes that this stems from her early reading experiences.

Leah supports children experiencing difficulty by reading with them or to them and believes that those who are stumbling "either need some help to look more closely or think more or it's something they're just not ready to do".

Diane responds to miscues differently depending on the fluency of the reader. If it is a fluent reader and the miscue does not affect the meaning of the story, she does not draw attention to it. With low-achieving students, however, she tries to "concentrate on the bigger words . . . not like 'the' 'cause that's a hard one to sound out". With these students, Deb feels she could "correct almost every word with some of them so I let it go and try and correct some of the bigger ones".

Irene asks the child "Well, what are you going to do now"?". If s/he doesn't know then she shows them. The student might "look at it phonetically. . . let's just skip it and read the rest of the sentence. . . well what do you think it might be, let's figure it out from what we are talking about here, that's close enough let's just skip it and keep going". S/he might also look around the room for words on display or ask someone.

Janet feels that students in this situation may be "afraid to take risks . . . they're not using the process, not guessing, predicting". She "tell(s) them not to worry about it" and finds that often after reading ahead they can frequently go back and get the word.

Karen believes that "taking a look or thinking about what's come before" is beneficial. She doesn't like "the children to read word-for-word-for-word".

Table 4.17

Teachers' Beliefs about Whole Language and Phonics

How does whole language relate to phonics?

Descriptor	Teachers
phonics learning related to spelling	S,L,J,K
learned in context	S,L,J

phonics presented in a sequential way (following McCracken's Spelling Through Phonics)	S,L,K
one strategy given to students to enable them to read or attack a word they don't recognize	D,I,K
not taught in isolation	S,L
important that students have a knowledge of phonics	S
students need to understand the role of phonics in written language	L
teacher promotes development in phonics as she models writing	L
not enough phonics, especially for low-achieving students	D

The issue of phonics in whole language is one of the most discussed aspects of the philosophy. Shelly's view is insightful--"I think that some people believe that phonics is a dirty word when you're in a whole language program. I don't believe that at all . . . the basics are essential but the key is how you teach them and that they're not isolated subjects taught or isolated letters taught at a specific time". Diane, Irene, and Karen see phonics as a strategy readers may use to attack an unrecognized word. Development of phonic knowledge occurs within a meaningful context according to Shelly, Leah, and Janet. Shelly and Leah further feel that this development should not occur in isolation. They both, however (along with Karen), admit to using the McCracken program which does develop sound-letter relationships by teaching students to analyze isolated words presented into sounds and to associate letters with those sounds. Interestingly, Karen reported that she has "hauled out phonics workbook pages and I found them very frustrating and not very satisfying for anybody, for the children or for me", yet the McCracken program uses chalkboards in a way that parallels the use of a worksheet.

Shelly, Leah, Janet, and Karen acknowledge the phonic learning that takes place as students are involved in spelling and/or writing activities. Diane views more work on phonics as a necessity for low-achievers. Whether or not Diane's perspective is consistent with whole language philosophy would depend on how that development of phonic knowledge was to occur. Views on whole language with high- and low-achievers will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 5.

Table 4.18

Teachers' Beliefs about Whole Language and Literature

How does whole language relate to literature?

Descriptor	Teachers
reading material (content)	S,L,D,I,J,K
literature - key ingredient	S,D,K
generates ideas for writing	S,I,K

familiarizes students with language of stories	S,I
familiarizes students with authors/authoring	S,L
springboard to other activities	D,J
the "beginnings" in a classroom	S
springboard to other areas of language arts (ie. drama)	S
analyze characteristics of certain stories (e.g. folk tales)	L
springboard for integration of language arts with other subject areas (e.g. read books that deal with children's feelings--S.S. topic)	L
definition of "literature" has broadened to include material such as newspaper articles, and comics	D
students should have the opportunity to judge whether literature is "quality" or not	I
literature becomes part of students' world	I
broadens students' vocabularies	I
getting students to want to read more	I
use good literature to "teach"	J

As with the previous question on reading materials, literature is viewed by all six teachers as the content, the "what" of a whole language program. Shelly, Diane, and Karen believe it is a necessary, "key ingredient" of the program.

Four of the teachers highlighted various effects of literature on writing. These effects include the generation of topics from stories, familiarizing students with the language of narrative, story structure, authors, and how authors perform their craft. Shelly, Leah, and Janet mentioned literature acting as a springboard to other activities--[illegible] the language arts, curricular areas, and in general respectively. A great deal of variability is apparent in teachers' responses.

Table 4.19

Teachers' Beliefs about Reading and Post-Reading Activities

What is the relationship between active involvement in reading and tasks assigned after the reading task, such as answering questions?

Descriptor	Teachers
questions to ensure comprehension follow the reading and are presented and answered orally	S,J
tasks vary - oral/written/representation	L,J
follow-up provided through centers	D,I
most important part is the reading	S
discussions may address parts of a story, such as the problem or outcome	S
follow-up activities often involve physical activity	S

sometimes students must use information gleaned from reading in subsequent tasks (e.g. reports)	L
follow-up depends upon literature used	D
depends upon a teacher's objectives	I
follow-up activities are "further interpretations" of what has been read	I
more experienced students can respond to texts through writing	I
follow-up activities must be "valid"	J
students are active participants	K
students have some input into tasks	K
tasks are open-ended--structured for success	K

In response to this question, none of the teachers dealt directly with the *relationship* between reading a text and post-reading activities. Instead, they seemed to focus on the example given in the question (reading followed by answering questions), as most of the teachers discussed question and answer sessions in their classrooms following a reading event. The most striking feature of these responses is the variety of follow-up activities teachers provide, although the tasks may not be relevant and meaningful language activities for the students.

While Shelly may read and ask questions of her students, she acknowledges, however, that she wants her students to enjoy stories and "not worry about what I'm going to ask them afterwards" so the discussions are very open for students to share their understandings of the story. Generally, Shelly follows up a selection with an activity which requires a certain amount of physical involvement from her students, such as using puppets to retell a story, making characters or settings out of plasticine, or singing a song. She has tried to use follow-up activity pages from the reading series but found "it doesn't work for me and it didn't seem to work for (the students)".

Leah varies the types of tasks that she gives her students following a reading task. She discussed a project that the class was working on where students were reading for information to use in a report. She gives students time to share after their sustained silent reading time as "often they need to tell somebody else about what they've read". She introduces more written activities at the end of the year as students are "more able to read" and "their skills are more developed at that time". She uses the written activities as they are a change for the students and she uses some activities in workbook form as she wants her students to "be able to cope in another type of classroom".

Diane doesn't often read and then answer questions with her class, although she acknowledges that "Kids have to know that sometimes they're reading for understanding". This is inconsistent with the aspect of whole language theory that comprehension is the goal of every reading event. Diane stated that her purpose in doing follow-up activities, such as reading a recipe and making the food, is to promote good feelings in her students toward school.

The questions Irene asks after reading a selection depend on her objectives. Sometimes before reading a selection she might focus the students on one area which will be discussed after the reading. She believes that this is helpful "to develop some of those thought processes that go into reading and understanding".

Janet explained her concept of a task being "valid" by saying that she hasn't used workbooks for the last ten years because she didn't feel that "fill in the blanks" types of activities were worthwhile. She feels that she might use "a context type of exercise of a story". Janet tends to introduce writing activities as follow-ups in the majority of cases. Although she previously stated that she doesn't use workbooks, she admits using some of the suggestions from the reading series such as those which have the students rewrite and those activity book pages which have the students copy parts of a poem. These type of activities would have limited purposes for students and would not be considered "valid" whole language activities according to the literature.

Karen introduces activities that are related to the topics of concern in the class. Her open-ended activities allow for individual differences among her students and enable each student to be successful.

Teacher's Beliefs About Writing

Table 4.20

Teachers' Beliefs about the Goal of the Writing Component

What is the overall goal of the writing component of a whole language program?

Descriptor	Teachers
students feel comfortable with writing/confident	S,D,I,J
students love/enjoy writing	S,L,D,I
students are independent writers	L,D,I
students write to be understood/express thoughts and ideas	L,D,K
students feel like authors	S
students tailor their writing to their audience	L
students write to learn	I
students know the various purposes for which writing is used	D
students become better readers	J
"happier children"	J
students share ideas with others	K

As with the parallel question regarding the goal of reading, responses to this question fall into two categories, those that deal with affect and those dealing with ability. Three teachers--Leah, Diane, and Irene included both aspects in their responses. Shelly and Janet mentioned only affective goals, while Karen included only the ability aspect. Janet acknowledges a reading-writing connection as she views writing as helping students become better readers. Writing as function was not a common response.

Table 4.21

Teachers' Beliefs about the Most Important Aspect of the Writing Component

What is the most important aspect of the writing component of a whole language program?

Descriptor	Teachers
students write frequently	S,J
students are engaged in writing for a purpose	L,J
students do different kinds of writing	S
students understand what they are writing	L
students experiment with and experience language	D
students use knowledge (ie. sight words) gained through reading	D
students learn to spell	D

students write for enjoyment and the pursuit of learning	I
students develop confidence in their writing abilities	J
students become risk-takers	J
students share/collaborate as they write	K

As with the parallel question on reading, the most striking feature of the responses to this question is variability. Again, the greatest number of teachers using the same descriptor was two. That occurred on two occasions, with the responses "students write frequently" and "students should always engage in purposeful writing". Some teachers seemed to interpret the question as the goal of writing instruction rather than the part of their writing program that is most crucial. Diane's comment that students learn to spell, while an important part of writing, would not be considered the *most* important aspect of writing with students of this level, as expressed in the literature.

Table 4.22

Teachers' Beliefs about Writing Materials

What materials form the basis of the writing component of your language arts program?

Descriptor	Teachers
paper (variety)	S,L,D,I,J,K

pencils	S,L,D,I,J,K
crayons/felts/colored pencils	S,L,D,I,J,K
story folders/writing folders (files)	S,D,I,J,K
literature	S,L,I,K
journals/diaries	S,D,J,K
writing station/center	S,I,K
personal dictionaries/picture dictionaries	S,L,D
McCracken's Spelling Through Phonics	S,L,K
spelling word lists and tests	L,D,J
coil/sewn/cloth blank books	D,J,K
sentence frames	L,D
daybooks (scribblers)	L,I
printing journal	D,I
deskpads (laminated construction paper)/laminated shapes	L,K
blank books for publishing	I,K
tell and show books (scribblers)	I,K
stapler	J,K

writing patterns	J,K
pattern stories	S
post-it notes	S
morning message (to teach spelling concepts)	S
workbooks	L
class newsletter/newspaper	D
date stamp	I
spelling files (words pulled from their writing)	I
story starters (e.g. what if . . .)	I
Power Writing techniques	I
brainstorming	J
erasers	J
shape books	K
chalk	K
picture stimuli	K

Variability in writing materials is obvious in responses given by teachers. A variety of paper and writing instruments such as felts, crayons, and pencils, were reported by all teachers as writing materials found in their whole language program. Writing folders or files were mentioned by all but one teacher. Four teachers mentioned use of a journal/diary with their students. Interestingly, four teachers discussed the place of literature in not only the reading component, but the writing component as well.

Materials utilized mainly with the goal of spelling development include various types of dictionaries, Shelly's use of her morning message, the McCracken Spelling through Phonics program, weekly word lists and tests, and spelling files. Five of the six teachers reported use of McCracken's program and/or use of weekly spelling word lists and tests. Irene's method of spelling development, pulling words from children's writing when they are ready to begin such a program based on their stage in writing development, although incomplete, is consistent with whole language philosophy. Her reported use of Power Writing techniques, however, is not. Power Writing involves a very structured approach to writing. Items like story starters or picture stimuli, while generally not encouraged by whole language enthusiasts as they restrict a writer's ownership and ability to express his/her own ideas and thoughts, could be acceptable if not overused and when employed, used in a manner which allows writers the greatest amount of freedom.

Table 4.23

Teachers' Beliefs about "Process" and Writing

What does the term "process" mean to you with respect to whole language? (writing emphasis)

Descriptor	Teachers
children continually developing (the process of learning)	S
begin with picture, increasing print, finally publish	S
get ideas on paper first, there are resources in the classroom to help them with spelling (e.g. dictionaries, other people, words around the room)	L
stages of writing development (ie. scribbling to independent writing)	D
"writing to learn" whereby students continually revise their writing, seeking new information from resources	I

As with the parallel question regarding the relation of process to reading, Janet and Karen were unable to make any response to this question when asked directly. Shelly and Leah reported some aspects of the writing process. Diane equates process with "developmental process" and discussed some of the stages of writing. Irene discussed her interpretation of Graves' work which views learning occurring through the refinement of a writing piece.

Interestingly, all teachers included aspects of the writing process when asked to describe the sequence of the writing act, in the following question. Although responses to the following question indicate teachers' understanding of writing process, it was decided to keep the information separate in order to ascertain familiarity with the term "process". The lack of response to this question leads to the conclusion that either teachers did not fully understand the question or do not use the term "process" to describe their view of the way writing occurs.

Table 4.24

Teachers' Beliefs about the Sequence of the Writing Act

Tell about the sequence of the writing act in terms of how it is brought to its completion.

Descriptor	Teachers
students write a draft	S,L,D,I,J,K
if piece is going to a wider audience, teacher and/or another adult and student edit together (conference)	S,L,D,I,J,K
writing is published	S,L,D,I,J,K
not all students' writing is published	S,L,D,I,J,K
writing is displayed/shared	S,L,I,J,K
students print final copy by hand	S,I
writing is celebrated	S,L
whole class brainstorms for writing ideas	J,K

published writing becomes part of the classroom library	S
students read books for story ideas	S
students discuss ideas before beginning a draft	L
students are encouraged to do self-editing/revision and work with a student partner before enlisting the help of adults	L
writing is recopied by student or adult depending on student's ability	L
students constantly share throughout the process	L
comment pages are placed at the back of published books (for readers of the piece to write comments)	L
in the final copy, the opportunity to introduce print conventions (e.g. paragraphing) arises	I
teacher makes the decision of what piece gets published	I
parent helpers type final drafts	J
students write first, then illustrate	J
students talk with their neighboring classmates about their ideas for writing	K
teacher listens to first draft & a joint decision is made about the future of the piece	K
writing may go home unedited	K

All six teachers discussed the facets of the writing process as set out in the literature. Only Shelly, Leah, Janet, and Karen mentioned aspects of rehearsal. Interestingly, only Karen mentioned this in response to the question. All six teachers discussed aspects of drafting, revision and editing, although no differentiation was made between the latter two (ie. revision dealing with content and editing with surface features of print). Student-teacher conferences appear to deal more often with editing surface features of text rather than revision of ideas. All six teachers acknowledge the place of publishing or sharing writing although not all of students' writing goes to this stage. A more detailed retelling of how writing occurs in each teacher's classroom follows in order to enrich the understanding of individual teacher's procedures.

Shelly wants her students to "get their ideas down" and so at the start students "strictly just write, write, write". If needed, they may spend time reading and looking in books for story ideas at the beginning of a writing session. After drafting, they bring it to the teacher (or a helping parent) and the story is gone through together. If the story is going to a wider audience, the teacher and student edit it together, with the teacher correcting spelling and doing other things that the student may be unable to do at this time. The writing is then published and shared in the author's chair and "just celebrated for being a wonderful story". The published writing then becomes part of the classroom library, available to read for all students.

Leah's students begin by writing in their daybooks, which is "kind of like their rough draft". If the piece of writing is going any further then students will go over the piece with the teacher, parent helper, parents at home, or a grade three buddy to assist them with print conventions such as punctuation, capitalization and spelling. Leah encourages the students to "do that first themselves" and "often they read it to their partner that they're sitting next to". She has her students sitting in groups of four, with "one or two fairly competent children in that group of four who can give the others help". The writing is then recopied--sometimes by the children, by the teacher or parents and helpers may type selections. All the way along the students are sharing and when the selection is finished they take it home to share with people there. When a book is published in Leah's room a page is placed at the back for comments--referred to as a reader's page. Sometimes larger more elaborate celebrations occur such as the folktale party they had after completing the writing of a set of folktales. Most students' writing stays in first draft form with approximately two pieces per month being published, often not in an elaborate way. Some writing, such as the letter to the Sunshine child each week, is not recopied but corrected right on the original draft. She does publish writing in the rough draft stage in parent newsletters with "a note to the parents that this is the stage it's in."

Diane looks at publishing as an imposed addition to her program by the whole language philosophy of the school in which she teaches. The school holds a school-wide author's fair and every student must have at least one published piece of writing for sharing at this fair. Students "sit down . . . and do a picture and print the words and if it wasn't going to be published that would be the finished acceptable story". If the piece is to be published, the students have two options. First the students can have work published as it was originally written--"with the mistakes" (ie. with inventive spelling) by Diane who mounts and laminates it or they can choose to take their piece to the school publishing house where "somebody there helps them with spelling, grammar, and finishes it up, then it's typed into the book form the way you buy it". Diane feels that this type of publishing can not be done with more than one or two pieces of writing a year because of the extensive work involved. She believes, however, that "It's valid for [students] to see that [type of publishing] and . . . being an author is a profession that they can have. . . an author doesn't need to be a good speller, an author doesn't need to be perfect". She acknowledges that when publishing with students you need to "show them what you're correcting and show them the errors . . . [but] it needs to be done in a careful way when they're young . . . you have to protect their egos . . it's you read and I'll transcribe and so they read and you write it they way it should be and you go over it and track it so it's not detrimental".

Irene views writing as having three main stages: first draft, revision/editing and publishing. She looks at revision as not necessarily being a "one-shot thing" and "could include conferencing with other kids ideally". With some pieces of work final copies are made which are displayed in some manner--displayed on a wall, published in book form. Irene acknowledges that "more often than not" she makes the decision of what a student will publish. She selects pieces to be published for a variety of reasons--to "boost a child's confidence or to encourage them to write more". She believes that when students have a goal like publishing, "their audience becomes more real . . . [and] . . .they definitely put more work into [the piece] in the initial stages." When the students are polishing a piece, they work with Irene, then independently, then back with her again. She feels the children see her as "'the judge'" and wait for her final approval". She admits that this is an area in which she is somewhat confused as she feels a need to extend their writing abilities but yet knows that with some children their egos may be too fragile for what could be taken as criticism. For the final copy, Irene works with students on formatting the piece and uses such opportunities to introduce concepts like paragraphing but states "I feel like I have control in that area and sometimes it confuses me".

In Janet's class, the children "just start writing". They work fairly independently at the draft stage and then meet with her for a conference. After the conference, a final copy is completed. The students bring their folders to each conference and this is where a decision to publish a particular piece is made, usually by the students. Parent helpers type the pieces and Janet enlarges them on a photocopy machine. The students cut and paste their writing on to pages that have been sewn together and do their illustrations. Whether or not a hard or soft cover is placed on the book depends on the quality of illustrations. When questioned about her insistence that students first write and then illustrate, Janet remarked that if she doesn't "some of the kids will never write". She does allow students to draw in their diaries early in the year when they aren't comfortable with writing. From these responses, it is questionable whether Janet fully understands the value of drawing as "rehearsal" prior to drafting and/or a beginning stage in written communication for young children.

In Karen's class, often before writing commences, students gather for a brainstorming session on writing ideas. Students who are writing independently often talk to their neighboring classmates about their idea(s) for writing and then write on it. When they have completed their writing, they take it to the teacher who listens to it. Then they make a decision as to what the next step is for this piece of writing. It could be decided that the piece is worth publishing or that it is "just a tiny little paragraph not suitable to take yet to the publishing [stage]". If it is not yet suitable for publishing, the writing may be put back into the student's folder, shared with the class and go home unedited. If the student wants to pursue publishing that piece, then "they work away on it maybe two or three days", discussing the piece with the teacher at the end of each day, and "when they think they're done, we go through the whole thing". Karen does all the printing and spelling as the student looks on and doesn't "even talk to them about [it]", although she does comment on the wonderful guesses made at the spellings. Karen has parent helpers that recopy the selections.

Table 4.25

Teachers' Beliefs about Writing Topic Selection

How are writing topics chosen?

Descriptor	Teachers
students select	S,L,D,I,J,K
sometimes teacher selected/set topics with varying amounts of student choice	S,L,D,I,J,K
choice often influenced by theme	S,L,J
writing ideas/suggestions given by teacher	J,K
parents are encouraged to help children with ideas	S
students gain ideas from literature	S
students are influenced by hearing other students read their writing	I
class brainstorms for writing ideas	I
writing ideas box for students having difficulty thinking of a topic	I
teacher encourages students to write about topics they are "experts" on, such as their own lives	I
picture stimulus sometimes used	K

All teachers reported that they have both writing times when students select topics and other times when they restrict topic choice. These restrictions vary to a great degree. When focusing on the content of other curricular areas, such as science, Shelly may restrict students choices somewhat, as she did when the students were writing on "bugs". They were to write on a bug--which bug was left up to each individual. Leah sometimes sets a topic, such as thank you letters for something received in the class and invitations to a special event.

Karen has two kinds of writing in her class. Students select their own topics during journal writing time, when she makes suggestions for topics. The other writing time is centered around the theme and Karen selects the topic and format for the writing. The students "freedom lies in which of those ideas (brainstormed by the class and recorded for all to see by Karen) they want to choose to make part of their writing".

Irene believes that one of the greatest sources for writing topics in her class is students sharing their writing. Not only is there sometimes direct influence such as one student writing about his/her grandpa and so another one does, but also because stories may trigger associations to other topics for individual students. Irene acknowledges the influence she has on shaping the writing of her students as she comments "If I say this was so neat the way an author did this today just before we go into writing then often I know that someone's going to try that out."

Table 4.26

Teachers' Responses to Students' Spelling Requests

When a child is attempting to write a particular word and asks you how do you spell this, how do you handle that?

Descriptor	Teachers
students are encouraged to spell inventively	S,L,D,I,J,K
give students the spelling/complete it for them	S,L,D,J,K
students are encouraged to seek out other resources (e.g. classmates, dictionaries)	L,D
approach differs depending on student's ability level	D,I
students needs to make some attempt to spell the word	S
procedures for help with spelling words have been established	S
students may have it written in their personal dictionaries	S
don't tell the child how to spell the word	I

All six teachers believe in encouraging students to spell inventively, generally as the word sounds. Shelly's summation of her reason for downplaying standard spelling is "I just want them writing". Leah was the only teacher to acknowledge the visual aspect of spelling, stating "I really try to encourage them to write down what they think the word sounds like and if they can remember seeing it somewhere what they think it looked like". Five of the six teachers give students words if asked. Irene doesn't ever tell kids how to spell a word because from a management standpoint she believes that if she gives "one kid a word when they [sic] need it then that's a signal to every other kid that every time they come across a word that they can come to me". She feels that giving students spellings also interrupts the "fluency of the writing".

Shelly has a procedure established for spelling words with her students. At the beginning of the year, if they want to know how to spell a word, they can come to her with a yellow post-it note and some attempt to spell the word, even just the beginning sound and a line, then she will complete the spelling for them. As they move into personal dictionaries later on in the year, they are to come to her with the dictionary open to the page on which the word should be placed.

Leah gives the oral language learning analogy to her students and explains that because they are just learning to write, as they learned to talk, she does not expect them to have everything perfect, which means standard spelling of all words is not expected.

Diane handles asking for spellings in different ways depending on what she perceives the abilities of a student to be. For a student that she knows can "do it", she would say "well sound out the word . . . look for it". With a student who is struggling she would "just go to the blackboard and . . . print the word". The word could then be copied into a personal dictionary by Diane or the student for future reference. Diane also promotes students helping one another and has tried to sit low-achieving students next to high-achieving students to facilitate this.

Irene's response to a request for spelling a word also depends on the skill level of individual students. Many times she tells students that the correct spelling "really doesn't matter just put something down that you think is the word". She acknowledges that some students find it difficult to leave a space and not be overly concerned about it. Sometimes she gives students clues that the word is up in the room somewhere.

Janet tells her students "just try it". She tries to encourage them by letting them know that she can usually read it and if not, she will call upon them. She points out that she tries to work in conferencing but that it is difficult to find uninterrupted time to work one-on-one.

Karen walks her students through spelling the word as it sounds when asked. Sometimes she will add a slight correction, such as "there's a silent e at the end". Other times she will help the student to spell as it sounds and let it go at that until the editing phase. Karen refuses to "sit and spell" during writing time "because you don't get anything done with the children". She is concerned too that "the children become afraid to try and it really stops your writing program".

Table 4.27

Teachers' Beliefs about Whole Language and Spelling

How does whole language relate to spelling?

Descriptor	Teachers
inventive spelling encouraged/acceptable	S,L,D,I,J,K
concern about spelling downplayed, at least early in writing process	S,D,I,K
spelling and phonics are related/combined together	S,L,J,K
McCracken's, Spelling Through Phonics used	S,L,K
spelling list and test given (N.B. all teachers demonstrated some understanding that this would not be regarded as whole language)	L,D,J
if writing is going "public", teacher &/or teacher and student edit for spelling	S,L
spelling is writing down sounds that are heard	S,J
students learn to spell by printing words regularly (often daily)	L,D
concern with spelling should be discouraged if it's interrupting the fluency of students' writing	I,K
students write spelling words in sentences	D,J

no isolated "spelling time" (however, uses McCracken's Spelling Through Phonics)	S
spelling concepts taught within meaningful contexts (ie. morning message)	S
teachers model correct spelling when responding in journals	S
Schonell spelling test used	S
spelling is developmental	L
students generally pick up the spelling of high frequency words through use (reading and writing)	L
formal spelling lessons taught	D
concern about when to begin insisting on correct spelling (moving students from inventive spelling)	D
let students spell words the way they want	D
development in spelling assists with sight word recognition	D
the only time spelling matters is on the spelling test	D
spelling instruction should begin when writing is fluent and some consistency in inventive spellings is noted	I

students learn to spell words from their own writing	I
don't ever tell students how to spell a word because of management and not wanting to disrupt fluency in writing	I
spelling is developed through use	J
help students use their visual memory to monitor their own spelling	J
some students will never learn to spell	J
help students learn to spell high frequency words first	K

The only characteristic of spelling as it relates to whole language reported by all teachers is the acceptance of inventive spelling. No responses were forthcoming regarding the stages of spelling development researchers have observed and recorded, although Leah referred to the developmental aspect of spelling without elaborating.

As mentioned previously in the section on writing materials, five of the teachers use a structured type of spelling program for all students, either McCracken's Spelling Through Phonics or a study-test/test-study-test method using a set list of spelling words, or in Leah's case both. Karen, while acknowledging use of the McCracken program, feels that to view spelling instruction as "Okay, we spell all these words now. You memorize them. They memorize and forget them, they couldn't read them to start with, so they didn't know what they meant but they can spell them--that doesn't make sense to me". Both of the aforementioned structured types of programs are inconsistent with many aspects of whole language philosophy including meeting students' individual needs and current understanding of the stages of spelling development and the types of activities that promote development in students' at those levels. The conclusion could be drawn that while these five teachers view inventive spelling as useful for allowing students to get ideas down on paper, they do not feel that these opportunities, with feedback from the teacher, can develop or do enough to develop spelling abilities of students' at this level.

Shelly's comments that exposure to standard spelling models provided by teacher's writing enhances spelling development and discussing spelling concepts within meaningful contexts, such as the morning message, are compatible with whole language theory. The Schonell spelling test is given to all grade levels at the school in which Shelly teaches three times a year. This inconsistency in philosophy is not mentioned by Shelly.

Leah admits that through experience with reading and writing the same words again and again students develop in their ability to use standard spellings. She acknowledges that her support group/colleagues don't give students lists of words and test because "they're not necessarily ones that have come right from their reading and writing and it's probably more meaningful that they learn to spell what it is they're using each day in their writing". Leah just started using a list and test approach the previous year and "found that some of the children who learn in different modes really like having the structure and being competitive and they like knowing that they can get the words right on Friday and so I just think that it's another way of reaching different types of learners".

Diane's comment that in order to encourage inventive spelling, she gives students the message that "it doesn't matter if it's correct (when writing a piece), the only time it matters is on the spelling test", does not adhere to whole language philosophy as the goal of any spelling instruction is to see standard spellings used in students' writing, not in artificial types of activities, such as on a spelling test. Diane is concerned with when teachers should begin insisting on standard spellings. She questions "When do you stop whole language or when do you start becoming more rigid in some of the things that need to be correct once they leave?". When asked about the spelling list and test portion of her program, she replied that she knows "it's contrary to whole language in a sense because it's separating spelling into a little category" but she sees this as addressing the "sight word part and we're saying 'yeah, if you learn some of these sight words it will help with the reading'". The list of spelling words has been given to her by "a teacher who's been teaching grade 1 forever" and she alters the list by deleting some words and adding others which often are "theme" words. Regarding the concept of a spelling list and test, Diane disclosed that she "had problems at first and I did spend some time talking to my principal about it and she said that everybody does . . . (and) you have to be careful not to separate it all the time". Thus, Diane tries to place the spelling words in context throughout the week by using them in her newsletter and having the students print them in sentences.

Irene's spelling program is the most congruent with whole language philosophy as she believes that "There's a place for kids to learn spelling and when I feel that their writing is fluent . . . and I start seeing 'when' for example spelled WEN constantly, that's when I start to pull words out of their writing and introduce them to a writing (spelling) file and so then they learn . . .. Once a week during center time they pick spelling, I don't care what day and they learn five new words that we take out of their writing".

Janet uses a spelling list and test although she acknowledges that "not all children are ready for (that type of program)" and that spelling is developed "through usage more than anything". She finds spelling a difficult aspect of written language to address and attempts to train students to monitor their spelling through use of their visual memory.

Karen uses the McCracken program to develop sound-symbol relationships for use in both reading and writing. It's how she gets her students to "think about how words begin and how they end". She feels that the words they need to learn to spell are "the ones they can't sound out, 'the' and 'because' is [sic] nice to know and 'once' is nice to know". She also presents resources that students can use for standard spellings of words, such as dictionaries.

Table 4.28

Teachers' Beliefs about Whole Language and Punctuation

How does whole language relate to punctuation?

Descriptor	Teachers
students made aware of punctuation in connected texts through highlighting and editing	S,L,D,I,J,K
teacher models use of punctuation when writing	L,D,I,K
students taught/correct punctuation in own writing	L,I,K
presented as something done as a courtesy for a writer's audience	S,I
students encouraged/want to use punctuation in their writing	S,K
students involved in hands-on activity to familiarize themselves with the various "marks"	S
a punctuation lesson may be structured for a student or groups of students based on need	I
students praised for use of punctuation in writing	I
developed through repetition of presentation	J

All teachers reported promoting students' understanding and use of punctuation by discussing its use in context. Four teachers mentioned modeling the use of punctuation when writing in front of the class. Leah, Irene, and Karen highlighted working within students' own writing. Irene groups students according to specific needs and presents a lesson on a particular aspect of punctuation if warranted. The general nature of the responses is that punctuation is not taught in any formal way, nor is it ever removed from within a meaningful context.

Table 4.29

Teachers' Beliefs about Whole Language and Grammar

How does whole language relate to grammar?

Descriptor	Teachers
rely on students being immersed in a literate environment	S,D,K
focus on oral language at this age	S,L,D
occasionally students' oral language is corrected incidentally	S,D
grammar is developmental	L,J
opportunity to address grammar in writing conferences (ie. when revising/editing)	I,J
not taught formally	S
emphasis on use, not labelling	S

correcting grammatically incorrect language leads to a change in the author's voice (ie. "it's not their language anymore")	I
teacher corrects grammar if writing piece is going "public"--to protect student	I
acknowledge that students with a different cultural (linguistic) background may have more difficulty with standard grammar	J

While only Shelly explicitly stated that grammar was not taught formally, comments made by the other five teachers are consistent with this view. Shelly, Diane, and Karen highlighted the importance of an environment filled with language, especially talk. As Karen put it, the students "pick up on an awful lot of these kinds of things just in hearing the correct way, there's so much more language in the classroom". Shelly, Leah, and Diane mentioned that grammar development tends to have an oral language focus at this age. Irene and Janet both mentioned using conferences to discuss grammar if need be. Irene feels that correcting a child's grammar results in something that is "not their language anymore". She feels, however, that if the writing is going public, she has to protect the child from correction by others, possibly resulting in a loss of self-esteem.

Table 4.30

Teachers' Beliefs about Whole Language and Handwriting

How does whole language relate to handwriting?

Descriptor	Teachers
whole class direct instruction given in letter formation	S,D,J,K
handwriting is important so that the audience can read what has been written	S,I
respect individual differences in handwriting (ie. neat/messy)	S
handwriting is developmental	L
proper form taught	L
must print neatly in "printing time" but anything is acceptable when not "formal printing time"	D
handwriting taught on an individual basis--writing used to assess those letters students are experiencing difficulty with	I
concern about handwriting downplayed early in writing process	I
handwriting needs to be legible	J
students write a great deal and thus use their printing abilities	K
printing improves with use/practice	K

A great deal of variability is found among teachers' responses to this question. Four teachers discussed whole class instruction given in letter formation. Leah disclosed that she teaches proper formation, although did not specify if instruction took place individually, in groups, or whole class. Irene doesn't teach printing as a whole group because "some kids are making beautiful 'a"s and some kids don't really know what an 'a' is and so to sit down and have everybody do an 'a' is kind of a waste of kids' time so what I do is we'll go into the writing again" and students work independently in printing books.

Shelly and Irene touched upon one of the goals of handwriting instruction--legible printing which enables a reader to read what an author has written. No teacher mentioned the role of handwriting instruction as raising writers' handwriting abilities to a level of automaticity, enabling them to get capture thoughts down on paper without paying conscious attention to the formation of letters. Brain capacity is then freed for use in the composition of meaning.

As with spelling, Diane's attempt to encourage students to write results in sending a message to students that is inconsistent with whole language philosophy. Diane feels that students need to be "disciplined in some respects and for 15 minutes a day or 20 minutes a day they can be disciplined and try their best to print as neat as they can but I would accept anything when it isn't formal printing time". This gives students the mistaken impression that legible (neat?) printing is irrelevant to writing and it's only importance rests with pleasing the teacher when involved in artificial types of activities, such as handwriting exercises.

Part 3: Teacher Profiles

Shelly's Profile

Shelly was introduced to the concept of whole language as an undergraduate and continued this learning when as a student teacher she was placed in a whole language classroom. Shelly sees a whole language program as the children "using real language" for relevant purposes. She views the "whole" in whole language as meaning "not fragmented" and elaborates on this by discussing the interrelatedness of the language arts strands. Also, she believes in presenting concepts students need to learn as a "large group" or whole and then separating out the parts from there "if need be".

Shelly attempts to place students at the center of her classroom. She spends time at the beginning of the year building relationships between herself and the students as well as among students. Shelly works around themes and feels that "the children contribute a lot to it. Lots of times they're the ones that determine where our theme is going to go to or how much we'll get involved in one certain area if they're interested". Often, students bring in resources for a theme which are utilized. Shelly is sensitive to her students' motivational level as demonstrated by her mention of decreasing the number of days per week that she did a morning message with her students as the novelty wore off and they became less interested. She believes, also, that literature is "an important key to the whole program".

Giving students the opportunity to read and write every day are the most important aspects of the reading and writing components of a whole language program to Shelly. She also notes the importance of students being read to every day as well as students having the opportunity to "do different kinds of writing".

Shelly views the reading and writing goals of a whole language program as students feeling that they are readers and writers. She wants them to both enjoy reading and become readers. Being comfortable with writing is also important.

Teachers need, in Shelly's view, to understand children's stages of development, such as the writing stages through which children progress. She believes that as a teacher "You really just have to know children and be interested in them enough to keep yourself updated". She acknowledges the individuality of each child and realizes that students will progress at their own rate.

To assist in children's development of competency in written language, Shelly uses a structured approach to writing at the beginning of the year. The class is involved in patterning simple books before moving on to writing in which they are free to select topic and form. She schedules a set time for writing so that her students know when they will be asked to write and thus can come prepared. Shelly believes that spelling development occurs if children are encouraged to attempt spellings independently. She does assist students with spelling after they have made an attempt. When reading, Shelly views a story increasing in value as a teaching tool if time is spent discussing it.

Shelly feels that she is "more intuitive . . . than articulate" about her beliefs and understanding of whole language. She believes that establishing "the right kind of atmosphere" in her classroom is very important. The phrase "building a community of learners" comes to mind as Shelly describes a caring environment in which children feel comfortable with each other, take risks, contribute to the group and are overall just "happy to be there". Shelly acknowledges the importance of children being actively involved in their learning. Furthermore, having a non-structured timetable which allows for integration of language arts with other subject areas, provides for flexibility in the classroom and allows Shelly to react to the children's moderating attention spans. Shelly credits the success of a whole language program on ensuring that students are involved in relevant and purposeful tasks as then "they feel a part of learning and they go away feeling that they've learned important real things". Time for adults to work with students individually allows for the meeting of individual student needs. Shelly considers an environment conducive to reading and writing development to be littered with print, have accessible materials, established procedures and a teacher who models both reading and writing.

Shelly feels positive about the environment in which she teaches. She appreciates having a supportive administrator and bulletin board walls for displaying children's work. She wishes that she had more space in her classroom for centers and laughingly suggests that perhaps the bells could cease to ring "so we can do whatever we want whenever we want".

Shelly mentions that she is concerned about people using the term "whole language" inappropriately. She sees difficulties with teachers being forced to adopt a whole language philosophy by an administrator or to give the impression that they are "up-to-date". She is concerned that teachers could "get carried away with the generalities of it and . . . never worry about some of the basic things that the children need to learn too". Shelly realizes that there is no one way to run a whole language program and thus a well-grounded understanding of the philosophy is imperative. She concludes with a concern that whole language is "getting a bad name for itself and it shouldn't and I think it's because of people abusing it".

Leah's Profile

Leah's interest in whole language was peaked at a convention session given by another teacher. Leah followed up on her interest by attending a summer workshop on whole language presented by Ethel Buchanan, purchasing a few books on the subject, and joining a support group. Leah views a whole language program as one that is "children-based", meaning that a whole language program begins "with the children--where they're at" and "is based on their interests and on what they can do and want to do". She believes that "It starts with whole ideas--stories and poems and then looks more specifically at sentences, words, letters, and sounds, so that the children have some idea of why they are studying these things and how they fit into the whole picture".

Ensuring students are interested in reading by providing a variety of materials (including both topics and levels), allowing students to self-select, and share with one another are the most important aspects of the reading component of a whole language program to Leah. Regarding writing, Leah sees a need for writing to be kept purposeful for students and that students understand what they are writing.

Leah views the reading and writing goals of a whole language program as developing students into independent readers and writers who have the ability to understand and be understood. She further believes in promoting students' enjoyment of reading and writing.

Leah feels that the main belief whole language teachers hold regarding children developing competency in written language is that they have to "learn to do by doing" and what they "do" must have purpose for them. She refers to language as being developmental and stresses that mistakes are part of that development. Like the language theorists, Leah uses the analogy of children's oral language development to discuss their development in written language. She sees value in teacher modeling of reading and writing so students "can see the kinds of strategies adults use so they can repeat or do those kinds of things". She wants them to have enough metacognitive awareness of what they are doing as they engage in reading and writing that if they experience difficulty they have a repertoire of strategies to call upon in order to try and overcome the problem.

Leah's notion of developing sound-symbol relationships involves "always talking about phonics as we're reading and writing" and using the McCracken program, Spelling Through Phonics, which sets out a sequence of introducing letters and sounds. She remarks that although she does teach the sounds in isolation, she tries to "immediately tie it in with whatever we are reading and writing".

The type of surrounding Leah views as being conducive to learning is "a very forgiving, a very happy, non-threatening environment" in which students are "free to experiment" without criticism but with support. The classroom is full of a lot of activity and is a place where students are expected to do as much as they are capable of and encouraged to do more. Leah believes that as a teacher you need to have an understanding of "where you want the children to be going and where the class as a whole is and where each individual child is so that as you're working with them you can keep extending their learnings".

Support from other stakeholders in students' education and more materials are the two items Leah see as helping her to improve upon her whole language program. She suggests that having "more teachers in the school on the same wave length" might be beneficial as well.

Leah finds that teachers she has met who are opposed to or ignorant about whole language are doing a lot of things that could be considered whole language, even though they may "claim they're on the other side of the camp". Her feeling is that "whatever you are doing with the kids that we [sic] are enthusiastic about and is done in a forgiving, loving atmosphere works". She believes that some of the "more traditional ways of teaching are probably getting very much the same kinds of results". She chooses to use whole language, however, because she finds it "kind of a bore doing the same reader over and over again year after year" and she enjoys "digging around finding materials (and) some of the things that my kids can come up with".

Diane's Profile

Diane became involved in whole language philosophy because it was the chosen philosophy of the school in which she came to teach. She describes her introduction into whole language in the following way; "I came to this school and when I interviewed [sic] the principal said 'we do whole language and if you are to accept the job, you must teach whole language' and I said, 'Great, I'll teach whole language'". She admits that she doesn't have a "particular interest in it and I'd probably be teaching whatever they (at the school) told me to teach here" and that "I'm not really sure that I believe in it (whole language)". She views whole language as "fun because it involves not just sitting with a basal reader" and as something that "seems to be working all right with most of the kids".

Diane sees the "whole" in whole language as referring to addressing the "whole child" and all of his/her needs. She feels a teacher's responsibility is to reach "as many children as you can rather than just a few who learn a certain way". She stresses both the integration of the language arts strands and integration of whole language with the content areas.

Diane's understanding of "the child" being at the center of a whole language program is that each child "feel successful" so "every little bit they do is still acceptable" and students "feel that they're doing okay even if according to adult standards they're not". She views whole language as "letting students off the hook a little bit. If they're not reading by the end of year 1 at school, it doesn't really matter" because the following year students proceed from their present level of ability.

Developing the "ability to read", meaning to "be able to tackle a piece of writing and make sense of it themselves without help" and students reading "at their level" are the most important aspects of the reading component of a whole language program in Diane's view. Her synopsis of the most important aspect of the writing component is providing students with the opportunity of "experimenting and experiencing language . . . and . . . learning how the English language works". She highlights students use of knowledge gained in reading transferring to writing situations.

Diane's responses to the goals of the reading and writing components of a whole language program are similar to those previously mentioned as the most important aspects of that program. She conceives her overall goal for reading to be that "each of my students learns how to make sense of print and learns how to read, whatever reading is, and enjoys it at the same time". Diane has similar goals for the writing component. She wants students to love, want and be able to write, have confidence in their writing ability, put down meaningful thoughts, and realize the existence of a variety of purposes for writing.

Students need, in Diane's opinion, experience with and exposure to language to develop competency in language. She highlights the place of practice and "practical hands-on" activity in developing this competency as well. Diane has difficulty accepting that students are individuals who develop at their own pace. She feels pressure from parents who may feel "I wonder why my kids not reading. Like come on they're seven years old. They should be, shouldn't they?" She elaborates on her uneasiness by saying "Well, you know everybody learns at their own rate and you give (parents) all those answers but then I think to myself, 'yeah, they should be (reading), like I've done all this stuff. What's wrong with them?'" Diane also feels that while whole language helps average or above average students develop competency, below average students "need more phonics and they need more help . . . they need more of the crutches and the rules, you know like two vowels go walking".

Diane acknowledges that in writing there are stages of development through which children progress. She describes these stages as beginning "when the child takes a crayon and starts scribbling, but it just keeps going and it goes from . . . scribbling to copying a word to drawing a story to ~~saying~~ the story to sounding out the words, to printing what they know without sounding out, just sight words, memory words".

Diane believes that a whole language environment "lets the child experiment with language and spelling and things like that are acceptable at different levels". She struggles, however, with "When does it all come together?", meaning when do teachers "let them stop experimenting and show them what the correct way is which they will need if they are going on to post-secondary education". Diane feels the atmosphere should be a "happy" one in which students can be successful and feel "confident about themselves". She highlights the importance of having many books and writing materials.

In Diane's classroom students' seating is arranged so that low-achieving readers and writers are placed next to high-achieving ones to facilitate students helping one another. The only time students are not allowed to work together is during spelling time.

Diane feels that she is in "a very good school for whole language". She highlights the quantity of materials available as a key feature. The improvements Diane would like to see are the reduction in the student-teacher ratio in her class and "more help for children who are doing more than their expected level and more help for children who aren't achieving as high as they can".

Diane's summation of whole language is that "It's nice, it's good . . . but I still think there are some drawbacks". She acknowledges that only having spent one year in grade one and using a whole language approach, she doesn't have experience teaching in any other way with which to compare.

Irene's Profile

Irene began her journey into whole language through a self-discovery process. Her first teaching assignment was to take over a grade 1 classroom mid-year, where Irene found an extremely traditional classroom, in which she felt the students were unhappy and "things just weren't the way that I thought they should be". She supposes that this understanding came not from her University courses in language arts, which she refers to very negatively, but through her experience of teaching figure skating where she "had lots of kids at different levels and nobody ever did the same thing". She felt that "Kids should be more turned on to learning than these little guys were". Colleagues guided Irene to some professional books, such as Reading is Only the Tiger's Tail (McCracken & McCracken), and she pursued other avenues of professional development in the language arts area.

Irene is cautious about using "jargon" to answer questions posed to her about whole language. When asked about what the "whole" in whole language referred to, she commented that it included many facets, such as "taking language from a whole and looking at it as a whole piece and then breaking it down into little bits", listening to "whole" pieces of literature just for the "pleasure of language", integrating the language arts strands, looking at the "whole" child, and "language across the curriculum", but that all of those words (jargon) can be meaningless as "it depends on a teacher's level of understanding . . . and how to best extend kids".

The focus of a whole language program , according to Irene, is "the child and their [sic] development". She explains that this involves helping students "appreciate and love learning and language" and using reading and writing not only for enjoyment but also as tools in the "pursuit of learning". Irene acknowledges that working with Jane Hansen, who encouraged her to make students facilitators of their own programs by giving "kids ownership and responsibility for learning", had a significant impact on her view of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Irene views the most important aspect of the reading component of a whole language program to be encouraging a love of literature by giving students quantity time to self-select, read, and share literature with teachers and classmates. The aspect most important in the writing part of the program is that students "write for enjoyment and for pursuit of learning. . . enjoyment and desire".

Making students want to read and learn to love to write are the goals of the reading and writing components in a whole language program. Irene wants to give students "the tools to write fluently and independently".

Irene believes that through exposure to literature and daily writing students increase their competency in written language. Teachers' need, in Irene's view, to consider the "'whole' learner", meaning addressing individual learning styles.

The organization of space and time are two aspects of a whole language environment Irene sees as important. She feels that a variety of spaces is needed, such as quiet places, sharing spaces, and spaces that address learning styles. Time set aside for "a lot of reading throughout the day" as well as writing and talking is also highlighted. Remaining consistent with her view of a child-centered classroom, Irene wants "a lot of kids work up on the wall to show that . . . the teacher is proud and acknowledges children and what they can do and that the environment is their own". Irene describes her classroom as "a flexible place that is still highly structured". She feels that at home students benefit from shared book experiences that are "a special time, low-stress, where they're held so that they develop a real love and when they think about reading for example or writing that they think about it with a really warm feeling, something they do for pleasure, not because they have to".

Irene feels that the environment at her school is "absolutely almost ideal". She cites a supportive administrator and parents as playing a role in her satisfaction. Access to a lot of literature, extra help in the classroom in the form of parent volunteers, and a flexible timetable "without someone . . . worried about how many minutes per day you give to subject areas" are other significant factors. She acknowledges that while some of the physical attributes of a classroom such as certain types of furniture are convenient to have, they are not essential. She enjoys having her small tables with the student-sized chairs, lots of wall space for displaying students' work, and good storage for books and other materials.

Irene is concerned with the use of the label, "whole language". She feels that "It doesn't really mean anything because of all the different interpretations of what it is". She uses the examples that teachers "may say they're using whole language because they're not using a Dick and Jane reader anymore (or) they might say they're using whole language because the kids get to use story starters now and maybe they didn't ever get to write before". She doesn't "like the term at all" and when she thinks of whole language she thinks of "McCracken's and . . . of a really frightening little term that is abused". She has discarded the label as she feels she "can't define whole language because it doesn't mean anything anymore to me" and has replaced it by talking about a "really highly literature influenced structured room". She feels that "You tune in very quickly with someone who knows that whole language is really confining and who's dropped that label and is just interested in language and learning. . . you're just not concerned then about calling it whole language". The concern arises when she can detect in someone using the label a "lack of pursuit for more knowledge". She is concerned with "teachers who begin to look for specific formulas in writing, and criticize when (students) don't produce. Sometimes I think that our weakest link in education is the knowledge teachers lack of the power of writing to learn".

Janet's Profile

Janet's first contact with whole language teaching was through colleagues at the school in which she taught. She "liked what they were doing and they seemed to have fun doing it" so the following summer she attended an Ethel Buchanan workshop. She continued in her pursuit of understanding the philosophy through school board inservices and by joining a support group.

Janet views a whole language program as "using good literature, good poetry, etc. to teach reading through usage". She see the "whole" in whole language as meaning involvement of "every aspect of the senses" and integration of the language arts strands. Janet believes that children are at the center of a whole language program. Her understanding of "child-centered" is that she tries "to get the kids interested and doing things".

Janet perceives variety, developing students as risk-takers, and children using context clues as important aspects of the reading component of a whole language program. When discussing the important aspects of the writing component, she highlights students "writing often--daily", building their confidence as writers, becoming risk-takers, and writing for a purpose. When questioned about what she meant by "writing for a purpose", Janet explained, "Like tomorrow, they're going to take our spring books and we're going to share them with our penpals".

Janet sees the goal of the reading component as getting students to enjoy and comprehend what they are reading. She believes that the goal of the writing portion of a whole language program is to make students better readers and increase their confidence, resulting in "happier children".

When asked about the beliefs whole language teachers hold about how children develop competency in written language, Janet responded that she's "not a philosopher". She feels that teachers need to have "faith in that ultimately they (students) can do it (read and write)". Janet demonstrates her belief in children's active involvement in their learning when discussing her general view of whole language. She comments that when using good literature and poetry, "kids talk about it, play act it mainly, they write about it". She also feels that students don't learn everything through a discovery process and uses this to justify her spelling program (list and test method). From her perspective, "The kids don't zero in on a lot of things unless you just pick it right out, so we have introduced a spelling program which albeit, not all children are ready for".

Janet believes that children learn through repetition. She criticizes the Impressions series (Holt) because in her view the vocabulary is not repetitious enough. She highlights repetition in her discussion of punctuation as well, stating that "I try to get them to notice a dot period but half of them won't and next year it's going to be the same thing, by grade 3 or grade 4 it starts sinking in, (students need) constant repetition I guess". Referring to questions dealing with spelling, punctuation, and grammar, Janet acknowledged the developmental aspect of children's learning, commenting that "I think that's the philosophy, that (aspects of language) will develop over time".

An environment in which children have "the freedom to explore and try things on their own . . . (and) where they feel secure" is the type of environment Janet feels is conducive to learning. Referring specifically to language learning, Janet sees the importance of providing materials such as books, but cautions against creating an overstimulating environment. Janet provides an environment where students may work together, although "it depends on the kids and how they seem to be handling it at the time".

Janet would like to have the desks in her room replaced with tables. She feels that this would enable the students to work together more easily and potentially "it might cut down on noise slightly" as students have classmates within a close proximity. She feels it would be helpful to have more supplies such as paper, markers (which she doesn't have to purchase out of her own pocket), and lots of books. She feels that curriculum does "constrain you a certain bit so I would have some of those constraints lifted".

Janet provided through her journal some reflections on her use of a whole language program.

> Whole language instruction is a lot of work but I feel the children are happier. I also feel, having used B. S. S. (Blended Sight-Sound) at one time that a phonics approach seemed to get the children reading faster but progress was not as rapid and the children were afraid to take risks. I am more comfortable with a blend of both.

Janet adds that ninety percent of the time she feels comfortable with a whole language approach but sometimes gets "VERY discouraged because progress is not as rapid as it would be if kids had programs built on blocks of words often repeated". She sees that whole language has increased students' writing abilities. The final comment that Janet makes concerns parents and phonics. She feels that there is a "fair amount of parental pressure" regarding phonics and that "a lot of P. R. needs to be done both in K and in 1".

Karen's Profile

Karen became involved in whole language through the administrator and colleagues at the school in which she was teaching. When she first went into a grade 1/2 class, she worked closely with the school's resource teacher and another grade 1 teacher. Karen describes it as "Every night virtually we sat together and we planned the next day and we planned the next theme. . . we'd bounce ideas off each other and then we'd go in and just use it in the classroom and over the years then we'd just continue to keep building on that". Karen has sought out and attended many conferences, inservices, and workshops on whole language. She tries to "get into something, one or two things a year, just to keep reminding myself and seeing what's there and if there's something else I should be doing. So I do attend a fair amount of inservices, I think it's important to". She also is a member of a whole language support group.

Karen views whole language as "a way of using the children's experiences and their ideas out in print so that it becomes more meaningful for them". She sees the importance of using natural language citing that "If the vocabulary doesn't make any sense in that it's so stilted that it is impossible for (students) to decode it, then I'd say that program isn't doing the best job it can to get the children, or the easiest job, for the children to learn to read and write". The "whole" in whole language, for Karen, involves using whole texts to "teach the phonics" and other skills, the integration of the language arts strands, and students having supportive contexts in which to read.

Karen doesn't use the term child-centered to describe a whole language program but discusses the importance of using students' experiences and ideas for reading and writing material in order to make school activities meaningful for them. She mentions the program creating a "high level of interest for the children", elaborating that whatever the theme, the children become "keen" on that topic. When discussing a favorable learning environment, Karen suggests that "The ideal is where the children just really choose where they want to work, who they want to work with and so on". She views her classes as "always very active. The students participate in their learning a great deal, they provide the vocabulary, they provide the enthusiasm, they often provide the information on how that project is going to go, like the one boy who said 'I want a table of contents'".

When questioned about the most important aspect of the reading component of a whole language program, Karen focused more on the goal of that component, stating that comprehension is most important. Her view is that "we only read for one reason, we read to understand". When asked to comment on the focus of a whole language program, Karen responded that she couldn't say that "if I left this out of my program that it would be crucial or that if I put this in it would be the answer to it all, because there are so many things that are needed for the children to learn". Karen sees the collaborative aspect of writing as that which is most important in the writing component. She describes this as the "sharing of ideas so that the children are not just sort of stuck in their own little place, trying to solve their own little writing problems".

Karen's views of the reading and writing goals of a whole language program are straightforward. She believes that students need to "learn to read and to comprehend", while in writing they need to learn to "get their ideas down and share them with someone else".

The ideas that if "children are exposed to good literature, they will pick up on it" and "if they're given an opportunity to write on things that they're interested in and things that are important to them that they will write on them" are two beliefs Karen feels whole language teachers possess about children's ability to develop competency in written language. Karen also believes in the need for directed writing activities as she wants "to have some input into the vocabulary". She feels that "We can't leave to chance that what they're going to write is going to be something that they read and then they become readers because of that".

Karen repeatedly highlights children being active participants in their learning and making experiences meaningful for children--using their ideas, embedding skills within whole texts, and providing a rich context in which students read. Karen also discusses with her students the reasons for highlighting a particular skill or doing an activity, in order to help them make the connections to real reading and writing situations. On the other hand, Karen feels it is necessary to use a structured program to teach phonics. She feels that "We can't do any writing until they've (students) got some handle on the words". The program is the "way to start getting them to look at the alphabet and getting to know the sounds of it". Her view of writing does not seem to encompass all stages of writing development as identified in the literature as she feels "especially at the beginning of grade one . . . we're really not writers are we . . . in the fall, it's just letters on pages if you're lucky".

Karen feels that it is beneficial for students to be grouped according to ability in the afternoon when an intern works with her students. Her reasons involve wanting "those children who are high readers not to be showing up nor slowed up by the children who are not reading at that level". She feels students having difficulty benefit from exposure to the story before attempting to read it either by having an adult read it or listening to a tape recording.

An environment full of print, with "exposure to a lot of books" and a safe, comfortable environment are two conditions favorable to learning, according to Karen. Children should also feel a part of the learning environment and have choice as to where and with whom they want to work. They should be interested in the content of the school day. Tasks given are "open-ended" so that all students can be "successful".

Karen believes making a few changes to her classroom would make it easier to run the type of whole language program she wants. Tackboard walls, enabling her to get display words, some carpeted areas of the classroom so students could sit and write on the floor, having cupboards, a bookcase, more space for one or two listening centers, and tables instead of desks are a few of the changes she would make.

Karen is a believer in a whole language program. She finds it "a lot of work, . . . but (also) . . . exciting and fun, fun for the children and fun for the teacher". She doesn't want to go back to using a basal reader and workbook, hoping that those experiences will turn them into literate beings. Her feelings are, "if anything, this can't be worse. It's got to be better, it has to be better. I feel the enthusiasm and I see further down the road the reading and the writing that the children are able to do and how much they enjoy doing it and I think that's really, really important, not just can they do it, but do they want to do it".

Summary

The most striking feature of the data presented in the preceding tables and profiles is the amount of variability in responses among teachers. This may be partially due to the mutlifaceted nature of whole language and the limited time in which to gather data.

While this considerable variability is present, some commonalities among teachers' responses were found. Responses given by at least five of the six teachers about the nature of whole language included the "whole" in whole language referring to the integration of the language arts strands; the child as the focus of a whole language program; curricular material amassed around a theme; the role of parents as one of assistance in the classroom and reading to and with their children at home; the importance of students' active involvement in learning; a warm, caring environment in which students are immersed in language; and evaluation utilizing samples of student's work. Common responses specific to reading included the goal of reading being enjoyment, the use of literature, poetry, rhymes, songs, publisher anthologies, charts, big books and pocket charts in whole language programs, and meaning being the focus of reading. With regard to the writing component of a whole language program, teachers generally concurred that writing or story folders, paper, and a variety of writing utensils are utilized; the writing process consists of drafting, conferencing (involving editing), publishing, and sharing, although not all students' writing is published; writing topics are selected by both students and teachers; students are encouraged to spell inventively, teachers will provide spellings unknown to students; and students learn about punctuation within the context of connected discourse.

A comparison of teachers' beliefs across the three areas of nature of whole language, reading, and writing revealed greater understanding of writing process and writing instruction than reading process and reading instruction. Beliefs which are inconsistent with whole language philosophy as reviewed in the literature were found in response to all types of questions.

Chapter 5

STUDENT DATA AND TEACHERS' CONGRUENCY/INCONGRUENCY RE THEIR BELIEFS AND ACTIONS

This chapter presents the results of the findings on students' beliefs about reading and writing and their reading and writing behavior, teachers' beliefs about whole language for high- and low-achievers, congruency and incongruency between students' and teachers' beliefs, and congruency and incongruency between teachers' beliefs and actions.

The first section summarizes students' beliefs about reading and writing, presents the findings of the analysis performed on students' oral reading miscues and spelling errors in order to infer strategies students used when reading and writing, and discusses the congruence/incongruence of students' beliefs and actions in both the areas of reading and writing.

A summary of teachers' beliefs about program commonalities and differences for low- and high-achievers and the reasons for differentiation in student achievement are presented in tabular form in the second section. A brief summary follows each table.

The third section investigates the congruence/incongruence of teachers' and students' beliefs about reading and writing. This section addresses the research question which asks to what extent, if any, are a teacher's and her students' beliefs of reading and writing congruent.

The final section deals with the congruence/incongruence of individual teachers' beliefs and teachers' actions. Selected beliefs for each teacher and behaviors discussed by the teacher or observed by the researcher are presented which demonstrate consistency or inconsistency.

Part 1: Students Beliefs About and Strategies Used When Reading and Writing

Students' Beliefs About Reading

Table 5.1
Students' Beliefs About Teachers' Actions Which Facilitate Reading Development

What does your teacher do to help you become a better reader?

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
reads books to students	R,J,A	N
tells students words they don't know	A	J
lets students take books home	B	
ensures students get books suited to their ability level and increases their difficulty as students gain proficiency	N	

don't think she does anything - student reads on his own	M	
listens to other students read	M	
makes you read		B
write a sight word to sound out on the back of take-home reading envelope		K
pick out library books		L

There is little agreement among students regarding the way in which their teachers help them to become better readers. Half of the high-achievers and one low-achiever reported teachers reading aloud as one activity used by teachers which promotes reading development. Reg (high-achiever) feels that his teacher reads "books and then we can learn 'em off by heart" which helps him become a better reader. Jane's (high-achiever) view of the benefit of having someone read to her is that the person reading the book "tells us what the words are and then sometimes you come back and you try to read that book and you just remember some of the things and then you can read it". Overall, the high-achievers had a greater variety of responses than the low-achievers.

Table 5.2

Students' Beliefs About Teachers' Key Role in Reading Development

What is the teacher's main job in teaching you how to read?

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
read books to students	R,J	N,J
have students read to her	M,A	L
have books in the classroom	R	
write spelling words on the blackboard and students print them in their printing books	B	
gives spelling tests	B	
corrects students reading errors	A	
writes the message on the chalkboard for students to "sound the words out to figure it"		C
telling you what to read		B
making students sound out and write words independently		K

Overall, students appear unsure of the teacher's role in teaching them how to read. As with the previous question, four students, two from each group, mentioned the teacher reading to students as one aspect of her role. The next most frequent response, reported by two high-achieving and one low-achieving student was the teacher listening to students read. Alice (high-achiever) stated that "When we're reading (the teacher) always comes around and if we make a mistake she says, 'What's that word?' and we say, 'Oh, that's THIS' and she says, 'No, that's IN'".

While students from both groups agree on the importance of reading books in the classroom, the remainder of the responses show that students from both groups hold diverse views regarding the key role of the teacher in teaching reading.

Table 5.3

Students' Beliefs About Teachers' Additional Roles in Reading Development

Other aspects of the teacher's role in developing students' reading ability

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
select material to read	R,B,N,M,A	B,L

Table 5.4

Students' Beliefs About Word Recognition Strategies

What do you do if you don't recognize a word?

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
sound it out	R,J,B,N,A	C,J,K
skip the word	R,J,B,N,A	J

ask someone what it says	R,N	C,L
read ahead and return to the word	B,N,M	
sound it different ways (e.g.. attempting different consonant or vowel sounds associated with a letter)	B,M	
figure it out from the surrounding words (ie. context)	J	
reread the sentence or portion prior		N
look at the picture(s)		N
say the letters in the word		B
take the whole book home to practice reading		K

There is a definite cluster of responses by the high-achievers. All of the high-achievers and three low-achievers reported associating sounds with letters to try and identify an unrecognized word. Mike (high-achiever) explained that when he sounds out a word, he tries different vowel sounds associated with a single vowel to try and find the word that "would make sense", meaning a word he recognized as part of his oral vocabulary. All of the high-achievers and one low-achiever mentioned skipping an unrecognized word or reading ahead and returning to the word after more of the text had been read. Four students, two from each group, thought of seeking help outside of themselves by asking someone for identification of the word. Jane (high-achiever) described her use of context (coupled with graphophonic cues) to aid her recognition of a word with an example from her reading for the researcher. "When I did 'checkers', I saw the 'game' there and then I saw 'checkers' and then I saw 'ch (sound)', 'e (sound)' and then it had to be checkers because there isn't [sic] any other games that go 'che (sound)'". Nick (low-achiever) revealed that at home his parents "just tell me to sound it out", but he also goes back and rereads or looks "at the pictures. But in resource I have to sound them out."

Of seven responses, three are unique to the high-achievers and four to the low-achievers. Students from both groups reported an awareness of the significance of context; however, they differ in terms of which portion of context they focus on.

Table 5.5
Students' Awareness of Inappropriate Miscues

How do you know when a word you read is wrong and needs correcting?*

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
the letters (graphic cues), sometimes involves sounds	R,J,B,N	N,B,J,K,L
doesn't make sense	J,B,N,M,A	C
the pictures		L

*this question involved giving the students specific examples from their own reading

Regarding cues perceived by students as triggering their monitoring behavior, high-achievers reported awareness of using both meaning cues (whether or not the miscue makes "sense", reported by five high-achievers) and print cues (reported by four high-achievers), while low-achieving students stated a tendency to depend primarily upon print cues. Only Cathy from the low-achieving group reported using the meaningfulness of a miscue as a monitoring strategy and only one low-achieving student, Lance, reported an alternate strategy-the use of pictures.

Bob, a low-achiever who noted that the letters can help in monitoring word identification, finds it difficult to pinpoint exact reasons for his correcting behavior. When asked why he changed "cat" to "can", he replied, "because it starts with 'c' and it ends with an 'n'". When probed further as to how he knew that wasn't the word "cat", he answered, "is it a 'k'?", meaning does "cat" start with a "k".

Table 5.6

Students' Beliefs About the Importance of Reading

What's the most important thing about reading?

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
that it's fun/you really like the book	J,N,M	
ability to read		N,C,J
trying hard	R	
you learn things	J	
it helps you learn how to read	B	

looking at the words	A	
so you can read when you're an adult		B
sound out the words		J
read quietly		K
writing		L

The most striking feature of responses to this question is the difference between high- and low-achievers perceptions of the significance of reading. Four high-achievers reported on the importance of reading for enjoyment or information, while low-achievers tended to focus on mastery of the reading act itself. Three low-achievers spoke of the ability to read. Bob (LA) referred to reading being important as people become adults and Jake (LA) mentioned sounding out words as the most important aspect about reading.

Table 5.7

Students' Beliefs About the Functions of Reading

Why do people read?

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
read to their kids	R,J,B	C
to get better at reading/learn how		B,J,L

to learn things	B,N	
to get better at writing		N,B
want kids to learn to read	R	
get things in their mind	J	
experience emotions (happy/sad)	N	
it's fun	M	
so you can help people spell when asked	M	
it's good for you	A	
so your Mom will be proud of you		C
don't know		K

Overall, high-achievers' responses tended to focus on real-world, functional uses of reading rather than on improving one's ability to read and outside motivational factors given by low-achievers, such as Cathy's response involving reading in order to make her mother proud. Interestingly, two low-achievers (Nick and Bob) mentioned the impact reading has on learning to write. The most frequent response given (by three high-achieving and one low-achieving student) involved the reading of stories to children by their parents. Reg (HA) explained, "Like if you have kids, you have to read books to them if they want to read a bedtime story". Jane's (HA) idea was that if parents' children are "bored and they don't know what to do, then they can read to them".

Table 5.8

Students' Beliefs about Their Role in Reading Development

Other aspects of the student's role in developing his/her reading ability		
Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
select material to read	R,B,N,M,A	N,C,B,J,K,L
practice reading (sometimes with classmates)	R,J,N,M,A	C
do what the teacher says		B
memorize stories so that when you are grown up you can still remember them		B
print and read the letters		L

There is considerable similarity between both groups of readers in their beliefs about their role in selecting material to read. The high-achievers also were in fairly high agreement that students should be involved in actual reading of connected discourse.

Students' Reading Behaviors

On the following pages, tables which summarize the miscue analysis performed on high- and low-achieving students' uncorrected oral reading errors and the percentage of errors corrected are presented. This information was used to infer the strategies used by students when reading and subsequently to provide the information needed to determine the congruence/incongruence of students' beliefs and actions regarding reading.

As a group, the high-achievers were more inclined to focus on syntactic and semantic cues and engage in less meaning change (Table 5.9) than the low-achieving group (Table 5.10). The high-achievers were also more inclined to use phonic cues while the low-achievers tended to focus on letter cues when reading material within their frustration level. However, there was variability within groups.

Three high-achievers (Bert, Mike, Alice) used a great deal of graphic information to predict words as they read. Jane's and Nancy's miscues indicate that they used the least amount of graphic information among their fellow high-achievers, instead choosing to use the structure of the language and meaning to predict words. Interestingly, their miscues resulted in the least amount of change in the author's meaning among high-achievers. Reg's use of graphic information was similar to that of Nancy, but he did not use syntactic and semantic cues in a similar fashion. Reg's profile does not indicate a predominant strategy used to predict words. Of the three who utilized a great deal of print information, Alice experienced the greatest success integrating that information with syntactic and semantic cues. Mike ensured that words he predicted generally fit the structure of the English language, but was less successful ensuring their meaningfulness within the sentence or passage. It is important to note that the majority of the miscues analyzed for Mike involved a passage in which the criteria for

Table 5.9

Summary of High-Achievers' Percentages of Uncorrected* Miscues

#	Name	Teacher	Graphic Similarity			Phonic Similarity			Syntactic Acceptability			Semantic Acceptability			Meaning Change		
			Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N
1	Reg (n=9)	Shelly	44	11	44	44	11	44	44	33	22	33	44	22	44	22	33
2	Jane	Leah	20	20	60	10	20	70	80	10	10	80	10	10	10	40	50
3	Bert	Diane	80	10	10	80	10	10	60	20	20	40	20	40	50	20	30
4	Nancy	Irene	40	10	50	60	10	30	100	0	0	90	0	10	10	30	60
5	Mike	Janet	80	0	20	80	0	20	80	10	10	30	10	60	70	20	10
6	Alice	Karen	60	10	30	60	10	30	70	30	0	60	20	20	20	50	30
Average Percentage			54	10.2	35.7	55.7	10.2	34	72.3	17.2	10.3	55.5	17.3	27	34	30.3	35.5

* uncorrected miscues are deviations from the text (ie. omissions, insertions, and substitutions) which are not corrected spontaneously by the reader

Table 5.10

Summary of Low-Achievers' Percentages of Uncorrected Miscues

#	Name	Teacher	Graphic Similarity			Phonic Similarity			Syntactic Acceptability			Semantic Acceptability			Meaning Change		
			Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N
1	Nick	Shelly	60	20	20	50	20	30	40	50	10	10	60	30	70	10	20
2	Cathy (n=9)	Leah	56	33	11	33	44	22	56	11	33	56	11	33	44	11	44
3	Bob*+	Diane	20	30	50	20	20	60	50	20	30	50	20	30	50	40	10
4	Jake (n=2)	Irene	100	0	0	50	0	50	50	50	0	50	50	0	50	50	0
5	Kim	Janet	70	10	20	70	10	20	40	20	40	30	10	60	50	40	10
6	Lance*	Karen	20	30	50	20	20	60	50	40	10	50	40	10	10	40	50
	Average Percentage		54.3	20.5	25.2	40.5	19	40.3	47.7	31.8	20.5	41	31.8	27.2	45.7	31.8	22.3
	Average Percentage at Instructional Level**		71.5	15.8	12.8	50.8	18.5	30.5	46.5	32.8	20.8	36.5	33	30.8	53.5	27.8	18.5

+another examination of Bob's miscues has been completed using only those miscues which occurred in sentences in which he did not receive help from the examiner (see following table)

*frustration level

**this average percentage of miscues was calculated using only the data of those students who established an instructional reading level on at least the predictable book. Thus, this calculation does not include Bob's or Lance's data.

#	Name	Teacher	Graphic Similarity			Phonic Similarity			Syntactic Acceptability			Semantic Acceptability			Meaning Change		
			Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N
1	Bob (n=7)	Diane	14	43	43	14	29	57	100	0	0	100	0	0	57	29	14

comprehension was met while his ability to read within the word identification criteria was borderline. Bert's predominant strategy appeared to be use of graphic information.

When interpreting the strategies used by low-achievers to predict words, it is important to note that for two of the students, Bob and Lance, the predictable book was at their frustration level. The researcher attempted to assist these students by reading the story a second time, prior to their oral reading used for coding, however; a large percentage of miscues still occurred. As demonstrated by the separate analysis of Bob's miscues in sentences where no assistance was given by the researcher, Bob tended to predict words, paying little attention to print information, instead choosing to "create" a story which sounded sensible, although it resulted in a fairly substantial change in the author's meaning. Lance also used little print information and seemed to rely on his memory of the storyline and ensuring the story made sense to "read" the words as he went, often omitting or inserting phrases of several words. It is important to note that Jake's analysis involves only two miscues and thus little (if any) conclusions can be drawn about his prediction strategies. Nick, Cathy, and Kim used a substantial amount of print information to predict words which were not always fully syntactically or semantically correct, indicating that use of graphic cues is their predominant strategy for predicting words.

Table 5.11
Degree of Monitoring by High-Achievers

#	Name	Teacher	Total number of miscues*	Total number of miscues* corrected	Percentage of miscues corrected
1	Reg	Shelly	10	1	10
2	Jane	Leah	29	10	34.5
3	Bert	Diane	14	7	50
4	Nancy	Irene	25	7	28
5	Mike	Janet	16	4	25
6	Alice	Karen	15	2	13.3
		Average	18.2	5.2	26.8

* miscues used for analysis included only those at students' instructional levels, including those where students met the criteria for comprehension while the meeting of word identification criteria was borderline

Table 5.12
Degree of Monitoring by Low-Achievers

#	Name	Teacher	Total number of miscues*	Total number of miscues* corrected	Percentage of miscues corrected
1	Nick	Shelly	35	15	42.9
2	Cathy	Leah	11	2	18.2
3	Bob	Diane	43	3	7
4	Jake	Irene	6	3	50
5	Kim	Janet	15	4	26.7
6	Lance	Karen	52	4	7.7
		Average	27	5.2	25.4

* miscues included only those on the predictable book (two students established an instructional level of preprimer but no miscues occurred on the preprimer text)

An analysis of the monitoring behavior by high- and low-achieving students demonstrates that both groups made corrections to approximately the same degree. The percentage of corrected miscues for low-achieving students may be artificially inflated somewhat due either to the context in which miscues were made or the manner in which they were determined. Bob waited for the researcher to provide many unrecognized words, causing a reduction in the number of miscues he probably would have made had he not waited several seconds until the researcher identified the word for him. Lance's 52 miscues involved many lengthy.complex miscues, involving the insertion, omission, or substitution of several words which are coded (and thus were counted) as one miscue. For example, the insertion of an eight-word phrase on to the end of a sentence would be a complex miscue of eight words but is only coded and counted as one miscue. This type of miscue behavior was not as prevalent with any other student.

High-achievers corrected between 10 and 50 percent of their miscues, while low-achievers corrected between 7 and 50 percent of their miscues, indicating that students at all levels are engaging in some monitoring behavior.

Congruence/Incongruence of Students' Beliefs and Actions (Reading)

Generally, high-achievers demonstrated behavior more consistent with their reported strategies when identifying words than did low-achievers. When faced with an unrecognized word, all

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high-achievers and half of the low-achievers reported associating sounds to letters, a belief consistent with the analysis of graphic similarity between students' miscues and text words. This analysis demonstrated that both high- and low-achievers used a substantial amount of print cues when identifying words. Of the three low-achievers not reporting this strategy, Nick was the only one to demonstrate a substantial amount of attention to print cues. Thus, his non-report was inconsistent with his behavior. Nick is aware, however, of the other strategies he reported using when faced with identifying a word as he demonstrated these (rereading the sentence and using picture cues) while reading for the researcher. The two other low-achievers, Bob and Lance, neither reported use of a "sound it out" strategy nor demonstrated substantial use of such a strategy as there was minimal graphic and phonic similarity between their miscues and text words. Bob's actions demonstrated consistency with his reported strategy of orally saying the letters in a word he was having difficulty identifying (e.g. "d-n-a" for and).

While both high- and low-achieving students reported some use of context in identifying words, high-achievers, based on the syntactic and semantic acceptability of their miscues, were more successful at predicting words which agreed with the surrounding context (grammatical structures and meaning). Due to this, many of the miscues made by high-achievers resulted in less change in the author's meaning than those of low-achievers.

Students' Beliefs About Writing

Table 5.13

Students' Beliefs About Teachers' Roles in Writing

What does your teacher do to help you become a better writer?

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
spells words for students	J,A	C,J,K,L
gives tasks like circling words and drawing pictures that represent the words	R	
she writes	J	
writes to students	J	
puts what students are to print on the blackboard	B	
has set up a spelling program at the spelling center (words from each student's writing	N	
makes students write more	M	

As with reading, students' understanding of the teacher's role in developing writing is not clear nor complete. All four low-achievers who responded to the question and two high-achievers were in agreement that their teachers' role is one of a resource for correct spelling. Nancy's (HA) response regarding the teacher's establishment of a spelling program also focuses on the area of spelling. While high-achievers include other aspects of the teacher's role, such as Jane's responses highlighting the "teacher as model", no further agreement of responses was noted.

Table 5.14

Students' Awareness of Spelling Strategies

How do you know what letters to put down when you want to write a word?

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
sound it out	J,B,N,M,A	N,C,B,J,K
just remember/memorize it	J,B,N,M,A	J,K
student can read words and thus spell them/ remembered from reading experience	R	N
see the word in your mind (visual image)	R	J
look for the word in the environment	M	
look in a dictionary	A	
my Dad shows me		L

The high-achievers were in fairly general agreement that they would either sound out a word or just remember it. The low-achievers, on the other hand, were more inclined to report a reliance only on sounding out the word. The two students not reporting use of a sounding out strategy are Reg, a high-achiever, who presented himself as a speller who relies on visual images and Lance, a low-achiever, whose writing sample demonstrated a prephonemic stage of spelling development. All high-achievers reported some reliance on "memory" or visual images, while only three low-achievers reported such spelling strategies. Two high-achievers and one low-achiever reported utilizing resources outside themselves (environment, dictionary, parent). Interestingly, no students reported asking either the teacher or other students for spellings of words in spite of the fact that half of them reported teachers spelling words for students as a part of the teacher's role. Nancy (HA) was the only student to volunteer information about the spelling program established in her classroom. When questioned about how she handles a situation in which she doesn't know how to spell a word she replied, "I sound it out and (if it's incorrect) I know I'm going to get it in my spelling file and I'm glad because I'll know how to spell it from then on".

Table 5.15

Students' Awareness of Monitoring During Writing

Why do you go back and reread/change what you have written?*

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
to make sure it makes sense/sounds right	R,B,N,M	
correct spelling errors	B,A	J
it helps to determine what comes next	J	

nothing else to do		C
have a different idea		K

*this question involved giving students specific examples from their own writing where possible

Minimal overlap occurred between the high-achievers and low-achievers responses. All high-achievers were able to respond to this question as compared with only half of the low-achievers. A fair amount of agreement was indicated by high-achievers, as four of the six reported monitoring their writing to ensure that the message being sent is clear (makes sense) to their audience. This strategy was not mentioned by any of the low-achievers. Kim was the only low-achiever to mention a meaning-related aspect in her response. Two high-achievers and one low-achiever reported monitoring their writing for spelling errors. From this response, it is impossible to determine whether or not students view spelling errors as potentially resulting in meaning loss for their audience which necessitates a correction or whether their concern is merely with "correctness" in writing.

Table 5.16

Students' Beliefs About the Importance of Writing

What's the most important thing about writing?

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
make what you write make sense	R,B	

try hard	R	
have confidence that "you can"	R	
helps to prepare you for "life"	J	
making good stories	N	
you learn how to write	M	
ensure letters are made correctly (e.g. an "m" not inverted as it becomes a "w") so as not to interfere with meaning	A	
make it long		N
make it "right"		N
it's fun when you write stuff down and draw pictures		C
write neat so the teacher can read it		J
it's okay to spell some of the words wrong		J
you can write about your Mom and Dad		L

Responses to this question were quite varied with no overlap between the high- and low-achievers. The only response reported by at least two students, was that writing should make sense (given by Reg and Bert, two high-achievers). A similar response was expressed by Alice (HA), that of ensuring a meaningful exchange between author and reader by using appropriate letters when encoding the message. Other important factors reported by the high-achievers regarding writing included a writer's confidence and industriousness, learning how to write, and preparing a student for adulthood. Low-achievers focused on the length, correctness, and neatness of a piece, and the acceptance of spelling errors. Interestingly, Lance (LA) reported a functional use of writing, yet when asked why people write (Table 5.17), he did not report any such uses.

Table 5.17
Students' Beliefs About the Functions of Writing

Why do people write?

Descriptor	High-Achiever	Low-Achiever
for fun/they enjoy it	R,B,N	J
write letter(s) to friends/ relatives/ somebody they miss	J,M,A	
to do "something"	J	L
"make people happy about their stories like Beatrix Potter"	R	
so you can get a job as an adult	B	
to learn how to write and read	B	

tell people what has happened to the author	N	
so they can make books for people		N
leave notes to remind you of things		C
to learn "stuff"		B
they really know what to write about		J
to take speed tests in math		K

As in the case of the importance of writing, there was practically no overlap between the responses of high- and low-achievers. The high-achievers demonstrated some agreement on two responses (writing for enjoyment and writing letters), while low-achievers did not produce any responses indicating agreement among themselves. Five of the high-achieving students and five low-achieving students reported functional, real-world writing activities. The sixth high-achiever, Bert, views writing as something that is fun and helpful in promoting development in reading and writing but purposeful only later in life when attempting to obtain employment. Lance (LA) sees writing as an activity to engage in when there may be nothing else to do. Generally, students limited their responses to providing only one example of functional writing even after further prompting by the researcher, leading to the conclusion that either students are not aware of the various functions of writing or that this knowledge is operating at a tacit level.

Students' Writing Behaviors

Two tables are presented which summarize the spelling strategies used by high- and low-achieving students when they encoded words incorrectly. These errors were taken from the writing sample elicited from students during individual interviews with the researcher. The information on spelling strategies was used to determine the congruence/incongruence of students' beliefs and actions when encoding words.

Table 5.18
Analysis of High-Achievers' Spelling Errors

#	Student	Teacher	Sound-based Strategy	Print-based Strategy	Not Classifiable
1	Reg (n=10)	Shelly	27	73	0
2	Jane (n=0)	Leah	-	-	-
3	Bert	Diane	50	50	0
4	Nancy (n=14)	Irene	56	44	0
5	Mike	Janet	59	41	0
6	Alice (n=6)	Karen	100	0	0
Average Percentage			58.4	41.6	0

Table 5.19
Analysis of Low-Achievers' Spelling Errors

#	Student	Teacher	Sound-based Strategy	Print-based Strategy	Not Classifiable
1	Nick (n=9)	Shelly	33	33	33
2	Cathy (n=5)	Leah	67	33	0
3	Bob (n=3)	Diane	67	33	0
4	Jake	Irene	77	23	0
5	Kim (n=1)	Janet	100	0	0
6	Lance	Karen	-	-	-
Average Percentage			68.8	24.4	6.6

N.B. In both tables, the number of spelling errors coded when other than 20 is denoted.

The most obvious difference between the spelling strategies used by high- and low-achieving students on words spelled incorrectly is the predominance of sound-based strategies used by low-achievers, while high-achievers tended to use only slightly more sound-based than print-based strategies. Also noteworthy is Jane's (HA) lack of any errors in a short (in relation to the length of the other high-achievers' pieces), 28-word expressive piece about her family. Words spelled correctly, such as "have" and "name", indicate that she has many words in visual memory. Lance's (LA) writing sample indicates that he is at the prephonemic stage of spelling development and thus does not use either sound-based or print-based strategies when encoding words. Bob (LA) was hesitant and fairly resistant to write in the interview situation, resulting in the need for the researcher to "walk him through" the writing piece in order to obtain a sample.

Congruence/Incongruence of Students' Beliefs and Actions (Writing)

Generally, all high- and low-achieving students demonstrated a substantial amount of congruence between their awareness of strategies used to spell words and their behaviors when writing. All high-achieving students, except for Reg, and all low-achieving students except for Lance, reported the use of sound-based strategies when spelling words. Students reporting this belief demonstrated consistent behavior as all but Jane, (HA) who had no spelling errors, used sound-based strategies to encode misspelled words. With the exception of Nick (LA), who had some unclassifiable spelling errors, students reporting the use of a sound-based strategy used it to encode misspelled words 50 percent or more of the time. Reg (HA) did not report use of this strategy and examination of his spelling errors reveals a greater consistent reliance on print-based strategies than sound-based strategies, although evidence of some use of sound-based strategies is present. As Lance (LA) is at the prephonemic stage of spelling development his non-report of using sound-based or print-based spelling strategies is consistent with his behavior.

All high-achievers and half of the low-achievers reported use of "memory" or visual images as a strategy used when spelling words. An examination of students' spelling strategies on misspelled words indicates that the actions of all high-achieving students reporting this belief, except for Alice and Jane, were consistent with this view. An analysis of words spelled correctly by Alice and Jane, however, indicates some use of this strategy. Of the low-achievers reporting use of print-based strategies, Jake's and Nick's behavior indicates use of the strategy to some degree. Kim's only spelling error does not reflect a print-based strategy but words correctly spelled by her, such as "like" and "my", do indicate some use of this strategy and thus consistency with her belief.

Part 2: Teachers' Beliefs About Whole Language for High- and Low- Achieving Students

Table 5.20
Program Commonalities for High- and Low-Achievers

How are reading and writing taught to high- and low-achievers?

Descriptor	Teachers
taught as whole class/no ability groups	S
exposed to the same theme in resource	S
students have choice in what they read/write	L
teacher conferences with all students	L
address students individual needs	I

time and opportunity to read and write	I
talking with them about what they are doing	I
introducing strategies as students are ready to learn	I
continuous support without apprehension about the level at which a student is functioning	I
teacher continues to believe that all students will learn	J

In response to a previously posed question regarding whether or not the high- and low-achieving students in their class are exposed to the same type of program, all teachers stated that the students receive the same program, but then went on to discuss how they do differentiate to meet individual needs (Tables 5.21 and 5.22). Two teachers, Diane and Karen, were so quick to jump into the discussion of differences that they did not answer the question directly. Teachers may also have felt that the question asked for a repeat of information already shared in the preceding portion of the interview and thus a great deal of information was not forthcoming.

It is interesting to note that Karen's original response to the question of whether or not differences in programs exist for high- and low-achievers was that she gives "no different approach to either one (high-/low-achieving students) of them, I teach the program". This statement appears inconsistent with whole language philosophy which purports to teach students (rather than a program) using teaching strategies and learning activities that meet individual needs in a meaningful, purposeful way for students. As with the other teachers, Karen did discuss program differentiation for high- and low-achievers (Tables 5.21 and 5.22).

Table 5.21
Program Differentiation for High-Achievers

Descriptor	Teachers
opportunity to do more "free" writing	S
students generally write independently	S
students print their own final copy	S
grouped together for reading so they are not slowed up by slower readers	K

Only Shelly and Karen indicated how they would differentiate their program for high-achievers. Karen's only reported action is to separate the high-achievers so that they are not held back by the low-achievers. Shelly's responses deal only with differentiation in the writing component. The lack of responses regarding program differentiation for high-achievers leads to speculation that much of these teachers' whole language programs are designed for average and above average achievers and thus modifications in programming are not needed for these students.

Table 5.22
Program Differentiation for Low-Achievers

Descriptor	Teachers
resource room pull-out program	S,J,K
reading skills emphasized (especially phonics)	S,D,K
teacher still scribes for children	S,J
individual help for student given by teacher or another adult	S,D
possibly continue in grade one next year	L,K
build student's confidence	I,J
do more structured writing	S
aren't able to do as much publishing as high-achievers	S
final copy is typed by teacher	S
focus on specifics rather than expansion of writing style as other students do	S
creative extension activities not as applicable	S
paired to read with another student	L
students given basal reader workbook pages to complete at home	L

teacher pulls out a group to work on skills (e.g. words beginning with the same sound)	L
more supportive reading techniques utilized	L
more successful with predictable and personal reading material	L
oral reading miscues are corrected more often by the teacher	D
decrease expectations	J
low-achieving reading group cover less reading material	K

The teachers were more inclined to report making special provisions for low-achievers than high-achievers (Table 5.21) in their classrooms, although there is little agreement as to what this provision entails. Three teachers acknowledge that their low-achieving students attend a pull-out resource program. Two of these teachers discussed the emphasis placed on phonics and other reading skills in this program component. The third did not discuss details of the resource program. Two other teachers, Leah and Diane, admitted that they promote more phonics development with low-achieving students by providing those students with take-home workbook pages and direct instruction respectively.

Shelly sends low-achieving students to resource room for two hours a week. There she has them "working on reading skills because . . . . the children that are weak, if they're not reading, it just reflects on every single subject area, so they would basically go to resource room for I call it 'old-fashioned reading lessons' . . . doing a lot of working on sight words and drilling on phonics". Shelly feels she needs to grow as a professional in the area of helping low-achieving students in a large group "because I get frustrated with myself, 'cause I don't know what to do for the little guy that is struggling". She believes that the resource room teacher, trained in special education, has the knowledge to help these low-achieving students. Thus, Shelly can "basically trust (the resource room teacher's) judgement and she can pick up on really what they need some more help with".

Leah reflected in her journal on one of her apparent low-achiever's ability to read a story about himself independently after it was first read by the class. She was surprised that he "read very well and only needed help with a few words--unusual for him. This highly predictable and personal story was easier for him".

Table 5.23

Reasons for Differential Achievement - High-Achievers

Descriptor	Teachers
enriched home environment/family background	S,L,D,I*,J
at a higher level of maturity/ready to learn/ developmental aspect	S,L,D,I
works hard/diligently	S,K

interested (e.g. in books)	S,L
more motivated	D,K
older (chronological age)	D,I
more cognitive ability	J,K
excellent listening skills	J,K
knows how to learn at school	S
wants to please teacher	S
is a perfectionist	S
has high expectations of self	S
has confidence in self	S
feeds on previous successes	S
has a larger sight vocabulary	S
"listens" to what he reads/comprehends	S
can use picture clues	S
gender differences	I
caring parents	K

* mentioned in one area of the interview but refuted in another

Five of the six teachers mentioned a supportive, literate-rich home environment as an important factor in students becoming high-achievers. In one part of the interview when discussing her high-achieving student, Irene volunteered that "I know that Nancy's parents spend a lot of time with her . . . that it's really important to them that they spend a lot of time, quality time and so I know that if I give her something to contemplate on, she has resources at home to draw from and talk to a lot". When asked about the reasons Nancy was doing so well and prompted by the researcher saying, "You mentioned the home involvement", however, she replied "No, it's a developmental thing". Three other teachers also discussed the importance of students' level of maturity or stage of development in promoting high achievement. Several of the responses pinpointed personality traits found in high-achievers.

Table 5.24
Reasons for Differential Achievement - Low-Achievers

Descriptor	Teachers
less supportive home environment/parent(s) don't have time to spend with child	S,L,D,J,K
lower level of maturity/stage in development	S,L,D,I,K
younger (chronological age)	D,I,K
limited attention span	S,J
less cognitive ability (lower IQ)	L,J

different attitude/activities in the home than that of the high-achiever	L
behavior problem	D
gender differences	I
home environment is not secure/basic needs not met	K

As with the previous question, home environment and level of maturity were those factors most frequently described by teachers as influencing students' achievement in language arts. Being "young" (chronological age), having less cognitive ability and limited attention spans were other factors teachers identified as contributing to lower achievement. Irene appears to see her role as an advocate for students as when asked why her low-achieving student was not doing as well as her high-achieving student, she replied that the former was doing as well as he showed "more than a year's growth since he came in (to her classroom)". When probed further about what would have caused the difference at the beginning of the year, Irene stated that "nothing" made the difference. They had just arrived at different stages of development.

Part 3: Congruence/Incongruence Of Teachers' Beliefs and Students' Beliefs

This section is designed to address the research question regarding the congruence/incongruence between a teacher's beliefs about reading and writing and her students' beliefs. Belief data on each individual teacher and her students is presented separately.

Shelly's Beliefs Versus The Beliefs of Reg (HA) and Nick (LA)

Shelly believes that the goal of reading is for students to enjoy reading, become independent readers, and comprehend what they read. Her high-achieving student, Reg, feels that trying hard is the most important thing about reading. When asked if he liked reading, he replied that he did, demonstrating consistency with Shelly's goal of fostering reading enjoyment. He had difficulty, however, articulating that which makes it fun. He stated "looking at the words and reading and all that stuff". When pressed further by the researcher about what exactly makes it fun, Reg disclosed "well books I don't like I just put them back and books I do like, I just keep reading over and over again". Nick, a low-achiever, feels that knowing how to read is the most important aspect of reading. When probed by the researcher as to what he meant by "knowing how to read", he answered "that you can read good". The researcher then asked him if that meant getting all the words right and understanding what is read, to which he both replied "yes", indicating beliefs both inconsistent and consistent with his teacher. He admitted, however, that he doesn't usually understand what he reads. Nick stated that he reads in school because he has to. In reply to the researcher's question, "Who says you have to?, he answered "Mrs. ________ and she's the boss of all of us". He disclosed that if given the choice, he would not read in school.

When discussing situations in which students are having difficulty identifying a word in context, Shelly feels that oral reading miscues which preserve the meaning of the passage do not need to be corrected. She may "feed" unknown words to students and help them to develop strategies they can utilize when reading independently, such as asking themselves questions like "What do you think it's going to say?". She admitted that she does hear herself suggesting "sound it out". Reg mentioned three strategies that he uses when faced with an unrecognized word. He sounds it out, skips it, or asks someone. Such strategies are compatible with Shelly's beliefs that students need to develop a repertoire of strategies for identifying words. Nick replied that he will "go back or go right to the picture, back to the beginning of the words". At home, he is told to "sound it out" and "in resource I have to sound them out". Shelly acknowledges that her low-achieving students attending the resource program are receiving "old-fashioned reading lessons" as they need need "a little bit of extra work on those basic things". Nick's beliefs are fairly consistent with Shelly, although outside influences from the home and the resource room are also influencing his beliefs.

Shelly wants her students to "feel like authors (and) comfortable with writing". She remarked that it is important that students "get their ideas down (which) is the main objective at the beginning of our writing time". Reg feels that it is important to try one's best, have confidence in one's abilities, write something that makes sense, and to try to spell the words. Nick had trouble identifying an important aspect of writing. After prompting by the researcher, he responded that you "have to write good . . . make it right or long".

Shelly has a fairly complete understanding of the writing process and appears to utilize that approach to writing in her classroom. Reg is quite aware of the process he goes through in writing a piece. He remarked that he obtains ideas from books, then writes a story (rough draft). After that, he recalled that his "teacher fixes it up (and) then we take pages and we write the real story and then pictures". Nick is a little less certain of the writing process. He spoke of writing letters to the special student of the week, saying "We'd write the letter and then we'll do a picture (and) they would put 'em into a book and that's all". When asked about story writing, he replied, "you go into books and you write a book and that's all".

Shelly encourages students to use inventive spelling. Reg is aware of this and is in agreement with his teacher as when he stated that Shelly tells him "just sound it out and if you get it wrong and you tried to sound it out then that's okay because she can fix it up". Although Shelly did not address the visual aspect of spelling, Reg demonstrated awareness of this component and the connection between having words in one's sight vocabulary and utilizing that knowledge when writing. Nick feels that his teacher wants words spelled correctly all the time, an inconsistent view with her promotion of inventive spelling. When encoding words, he tries to associate letters with sounds, a strategy consistent with that promoted by his teacher and also said that some words he remembers from seeing them before.

Overall, Shelly and her students are generally consistent in their beliefs about reading and writing. The high-achiever, Reg's belief statements were somewhat more consistent than those of Nick, the low-achiever. Some of Nick's inconsistent beliefs appeared to have developed from input outside of Shelly's classroom.

Leah's Beliefs Versus The Beliefs of Jane (HA) and Cathy (LA)

Leah, like Shelly, believes that comprehension, enjoyment, and becoming an independent reader are goals of reading. When asked about the most important thing about reading, Jane, a high-achiever, demonstrated consistency with Leah when she announced "That it's fun". When probed further, she clarified that "It sort of helps you learn things". Cathy, a low-achiever, feels learning how to read is most important, a view inconsistent with that of her teacher. Cathy elaborated by stating that you'd need that ability if you wanted to read to your children when you got older.

Leah is not concerned with students' oral reading miscues which preserve the author's meaning. She will sometimes "feed" students words so they do not get bogged down and tries to help them develop strategies, based on the cueing systems inherent in written language, for identifying unrecognized words. When faced with an unrecognized word, Jane tries sounding out the word, but if she can't, skips and goes on to the next word which often helps her to identify the problem word. While Jane's view is somewhat consistent with Leah's beliefs, the inflexibility of her word recognition strategies (primary reliance on a sounding strategy) is not. Cathy conceded to having only two strategies, sounding out the word or asking her teacher. When asked who helped her learn to sound out the words, she replied that she taught herself. Cathy's lack of knowledge of a variety of word recognition strategies is inconsistent with Leah's beliefs.

As with reading, Leah feels that the goals of writing instruction should be enjoyment, expression of thought, and becoming an independent writer. She acknowledges the importance of students viewing writing as purposeful. Jane sees the usefulness of writing in the distant future as she explained how she would need to be able to write if she were a doctor. When asked why people write, however, she responded that writing is something to do if one is bored and that "if you were in the hospital you could write to your friends". Cathy had difficulty verbalizing "the most important thing about writing". She enjoys writing, stating that it is fun because "you write stuff down and you draw pictures". She knows that one purposeful use of writing is to remind people to do things which otherwise might have been forgotten. The limited view of writing as a functional activity expressed by both students is not congruent with Leah's beliefs.

Leah has a fairly complete understanding of a process approach to writing and how to operationalize the approach in her classroom. Jane's view of the writing process is that "We think up the things and then we write them". She knows her writing is finished when she "can't put down any more things" and frequently stories are read in "front of everybody". Jane's understanding of writing as involving some rehearsal, drafting and sharing is consistent, although not as complete as that of her teacher. Cathy's view of writing is "Well, we write!". When asked if she ever worked with or talked to her classmates when writing, she replied, "No". When the writing is completed, she reported that they turn the paper over, put their name on it, and then put it into their mailboxes to be taken home at the end of the day. Cathy's view of the writing process appears to be solely drafting and is more limited than that of either Jane or Leah.

Leah feels that students should be encouraged to spell inventively and/or try to remember visual images of words from previous experiences with the words in print, teachers can supply spellings for students upon request, and students should learn to use other spelling resources such as dictionaries. . Jane stated that her teacher does not expect all words to be spelled correctly and that sometimes when writing, she just leaves a space so that later she can ask for the spelling. Often, she encodes words by sounding them out, "just like reading". Some words she just remembers how they are spelled. These actions are consistent with Leah's beliefs about spelling. Cathy feels her teacher wants her to have everything spelled correctly because of the spelling program in place in the classroom, involving eight words on a word list and a weekly test. Obviously this view in inconsistent with the espoused beliefs of her teacher (that inventive spelling is encouraged); however, when the teacher's actions are considered (the list-test method of spelling development), Cathy's development of incongruous beliefs seems logical. When asked about what her teacher says about the content of her writing, Cathy appeared still concerned with writing mechanics as she replied, "She says if we make a word wrong, she says erase the word right there and she points to the word". This concern with writing mechanics before expression and clarity of thought is inconsistent with Leah. Cathy reported associating the sounds heard in words with letters as her main strategy for encoding words.

Jane, the high-achiever, demonstrated more congruency with the beliefs of her teacher than did Cathy, the low-achiever, although some incongruency in teacher-student beliefs was demonstrated when both students discussed word recognition strategies. The beliefs about writing and spelling held by Cathy and her teacher are quite different.

Diane's Beliefs Versus the Beliefs of Bert (HA) and Bob (LA)

Diane feels that the goal of reading instruction is that students learn how to read, become independent readers, and that they enjoy reading. She feels that enjoyment is a minor goal and that the main one is learning to read. Bert's view, that of a high-achiever, is consistent with his teacher's belief as he responded that the most important thing about reading is that "it helps you learn how to read". He does acknowledge that people read to "learn things" and to "read to their kids". Bob, a low-achiever, views reading as something important for one's adulthood. He commented that people read so they "can help do stuff and not be lazy (and) know how to read and . . . how to make books", an understanding of the importance of reading compatible with that of Diane.

Diane's response to a student who makes an oral reading miscue depends upon whether or not the miscue changes the meaning of the sentence and the fluency of the reader. She explicitly tells students the strategy that they should use to try and identify the word (such as returning to the title because the word with which the student is experiencing difficulty is in the title). Diane feels that with low-achievers she could just about correct every word and thus tries to concentrate on "bigger words" and ones they can sound out. Bert's initial response to what he does when faced with an unrecognized word is to sound it out. When probed with the question "What do you do if that doesn't work?", he responded, "You just go on". He stated that sometimes he reads ahead and then goes back to the unknown word and other times just continues reading. His use of some variety of word recognition strategies is consistent with Diane's presentation of such strategies. Bob reported that if you don't know a word, you use a strategy his father taught him, saying the letters in the word (e.g. Bob says the letters t-h-e if he can not identify the word "the"), a view not compatible with his teacher.

Diane views the goals of writing instruction as students enjoying writing, becoming independent writers, gaining confidence in their writing ability, and knowing the various functions of writing. Bert feels making a piece of writing make sense is the most important aspect of writing. He sees the reasons why people write as pertaining to their adult life, so they can get a job, as well as writing because it is fun. He stated that it's fun because "You learn how to write and you learn how to read". Writing is done in school so you "learn how to write". All of these beliefs stated by

Bert are compatible with Diane's beliefs. Even after extensive prompting by the researcher, Bob did not respond with his view of the most important thing about writing. He sees writing as something done so people "can learn stuff".

Diane discussed the drafting, editing, and publishing stages of writing as those which occur with her students. No mention was made of rehearsal or sharing/displaying work other than the school-wide author's fair held every year. Writing conferences between Diane and her students appear to focus on correcting mechanical aspects of writing. Bert reported that during writing time, he can write whatever he wants and that he works by himself. Diane writes back to the students in their journals. According to Bert, she "writes about your story", sometimes communicating "I liked your story". He reported that there aren't opportunities to share stories with the other students. Bert's view of "writing" appears similar to that of Diane's, although both are incomplete. Bob's perception of writing time is that "One of the people passes out paper and you hafta [sic] work", a view inconsistent with Diane's desire for students to enjoy writing and understand its functions.

Diane's response to a request for the spelling of a word depends upon the student's level of achievement. Students who can write by associating letters with sounds are encouraged to do so. Those who would "struggle" with this strategy would be given the word (e.g. Diane would write the word on the blackboard). She also encourages students to use other resources such as classmates. Diane uses a pre-test/post-test spelling program. She feels the only time spelling should matter is on the spelling test (similar to her view of handwriting only mattering while students are involved in printing exercises). When involved in other activities, students should spell "as they want". Bert understands the two types of spelling that occur in his classroom. He reported that his teacher doesn't expect everything to be spelled correctly when writing and that he is expected to just sound it out, although he also admitted that with some words he just "knew it [sic] from before". On the spelling tests, however, he pointed out that "If you don't get everything correct, then you have to do the second test". When probed further as to the consequences if there are still misspellings on the second test, he replied, "Then, it's just bad luck". Bert is also aware of his teacher's viewpoint about handwriting being important only during "printing time" as he responded "She doesn't care unless it's in printing" when asked if his teacher was concerned with letter formation. Bob believes that his teacher wants him to have everything spelled correctly, a logical assumuption based on his teacher's actions and consistent with her philosophy that low-achievers need words spelled for them. Bob was unable to articulate spelling strategies used when involved in writing, even after prompting by the researcher. He was asked how he knew to select a "b" to spell "blue". He replied "Because blue starts with b".

Because in many situations Diane holds different beliefs regarding the development of students' reading and writing abilities based on their level of achievement, high- and low-achieving students may hold different beliefs from one another and yet still be consistent with those of their teacher. Generally, this is the case in this situation, although there seems to be somewhat more agreement between Bert and Diane than between Bob and Diane.

Irene's Beliefs Versus the Beliefs of Nancy (HA) and Jake (LA)

Irene believes that the goal of reading instruction is to foster a love of reading so that students want to read. Irene's high-achiever, Nancy, holds a view of reading consistent with that of her teacher. When asked about the most important thing about reading, she responded "well the important thing is that you really like the book and you wanna [sic] keep going". She further explained that if she doesn't like a book, an infrequent occurrence, she tells her teacher who may suggest to read a bit further or give her a different book. Nancy feels people read because it's fun. According to her, "You get busy . . . and it's fun finding out new things". When asked about the purpose of story reading, she replied, "If it's a funny book, I really think funny and if it's a sad book, I think sad". Irene feels very strongly about developing a "love of literature" in her classroom and uses it to promote positive student attitudes toward reading. Jake, a low-achiever, views the important aspect of reading as a person "know(ing) how to read and sound out the words". According to Jake, the value of reading lies in improving one's reading ability. These beliefs are incongruent with those of Irene. Jake admitted that he enjoys reading but had difficulty pinpointing precisely what makes it enjoyable. In his explanation, he again took the stance that he learns to read by reading. He also mentioned that he enjoys reading word lists.

Irene tries to help students develop strategies they can use independently when faced with an unrecognized word. Strategies she has suggested include word analysis, skipping the word, substituting a word that would make sense, using the surrounding context, using environmental print, and asking another person. Nancy reported that when faced with an unrecognized word she uses many of the word recognition strategies promoted by her teacher such as sounding it out, asking an adult, returning to the word after skipping it and completing the sentence, and just skipping the word. Jake acknowledges that his primary strategy for figuring out an unknown word is to "sound it out". If he couldn't sound it out, he would just skip it. He mentioned that he would come back and reread the same book again. Although Jake disclosed some flexiblity in his word identification strategies, his reliance on a sounding strategy indicates that his beliefs are somewhat inconsistent with Irene's beliefs.

Irene wants students to write with confidence, enjoy writing, become independent writers, and write to learn. The latter response is one functional aspect of writing. Nancy's views in this area are similar to that of her teacher. She feels the most important thing about writing is making good stories. She thinks of writing as fun, although she doesn't know if other people do. When asked what makes it fun, she answered, "You can tell other people what happened to you before". Although, Jake spoke of the importance of neatness in writing "to make sure that Teacher can read it", he demonstrated consistency with his teacher in some of his other belief statements. He realizes that it is acceptable to "get some of the words wrong" and believes that people write because they "enjoy writing and they really know what to write about". He stated that he likes to write, especially about "jets" with his friend.

Irene's understanding of the writing process in action includes drafting, revising and editing, and publishing. She likes students to do peer conferencing as well as teacher-student conferencing but admitted that this is not always possible. She encourages a lot of collaboration among students as they are writing. Nancy's view of writing parallels and expands upon that of her teacher. In her description of what takes place during "writing time", she stated that students write in their writing books and "sometimes as we go along we plan" (rehearsal). She did not discuss the conferencing situation but instead jumped into discussing that "If Mrs. __________ thinks we really put some good work into our book, then we get it published". Nancy explained how sharing occurs in their classroom. When a published book is complete, it is housed on a special shelf which the students have access to during reading time. Generally, books are read by the author to the class and sometimes books are read at school-wide assemblies. Jake's version of the sequence of the writing act in the classroom is less complete and differs somewhat from Nancy's but is still fairly consistent with Irene's beliefs, especially considering her views on differentiating for low-achievers. Jake revealed that sometimes painting or drawing precluded his writing, a known "rehearsal" strategy for young students. He views writing as getting a piece of paper, writing fairly independently, then having his teacher help him with the spellings of words. The teacher then recopies the piece and it is sent outside the classroom to be typed. When the piece is returned, "You draw the pictures and then you put it in a pile and you can share it in assembly or upstairs when it's open activities".

Irene's response to students' requests for spellings depends upon the skills a student possesses. She makes it clear that she does not give students spellings of words, but helps them to develop their own strategies. These strategies include inventive spelling (isolating sounds heard in a word and associating letters with those sounds), looking for the word in the environment, and leaving a space for the-word and returning to it later. Irene believes in students learning how to spell using words from their own writing and has established a program around this belief. Nancy understands that her teacher does not expect all words spelled in standard form. She believes that when encoding words she relies on sounding words out, although sometimes she just "remember(s) them". She has a good understanding of the spelling program in place in her classroom and the relationship between the program and her own writing. Jake, too, knows that his teacher does not expect perfect spelling. He mentioned the use of both sound-based and visual-based strategies. Both students beliefs about spelling parallel those of their teacher.

All of the beliefs forthcoming from Nancy, the high-achiever demonstrate congruence with those of her teacher. While Jake, the low-achiever, also stated beliefs which were fairly consistent with Irene, inconsistencies arose in the beliefs surrounding the importance of reading and word recognition strategies.

Janet's Beliefs Versus the Beliefs of Mike (HA) and Kim (LA)

Janet views the goal of the reading component of a whole language program as students enjoying and understanding what they read. Mike, a high-achiever, demonstrated a lot of consistency with his teacher when he declared that the most important thing about reading was "That it's fun!" He explained that certain types of books are fun for him, "mystery books and scary ones and adventure ones". He believes that people read because it is fun and to learn how to spell words in case "somebody asks you". He believes that the purpose of reading in school is to learn. After probing by the researcher, Kim, a low-achiever, reported the most important thing about reading is to read quietly. She couldn't articulate reasons for people reading. When asked about the reason for reading in school, she replied, "Because we have to". She identified the teacher as the person responsible for this situation. Kim's views about the importance of reading are quite different from those espoused by her teacher.

Janet views oral reading miscues that preserve the author's meaning as not in need of correction. She tries to help students develop strategies for those times when they are faced with an unrecognized word. To develop these strategies, she asks questions such as, "What do you think that might be?, What are we talking about?, What of the picture? . . .". Consistency with Janet's beliefs was demonstrated by Mike who reported that when reading and experiencing difficulty with a word he tries associating different sounds to parts of the word (e.g. long or short sound of "i") until it "make(s) sense". He also might skip a word, then come back and try to figure it out. Kim's understanding of word recognition strategies are limited compared to that of her teacher. According to Kim, when faced with an unknown word, "We have to try and sound it out". When asked if she ever skipped a word, she replied, "No, we don't do that". She stated that she takes books home to read and if she is experiencing difficulty identifying words "my Mom says the words".

Janet highlighted positive attitudes about writing and improving students' reading abilities as goals of writing instruction. She feels that students need to be engaged in purposeful writing. Also, they should have confidence in their writing ability and be risk-takers. Mike's beliefs are not that similar to Janet's. He reported that learning how to write "if you don't know" is the most important thing about writing. When asked why people write, he responded that writing is used when you "want to write a letter to somebody that (you) really miss", demonstrating some consistency with Janet's belief that students should be involved in purposeful writing. His report, however, that the reason for writing at school is "So you can get better at it" is not consistent with this belief. Kim could not articulate a most important aspect of writing. She disclosed that she likes writing because she can write "so fast" and fill up all "the blanks". Kim had difficulty expressing the reasons people write. The example she gave from her experience in class involved a speed test in mathematics. Some consistency with Janet's beliefs is found in Kim's positive attitude toward writing; however, writing appears to have little function for her.

Janet discussed or demonstrated all aspects of the writing process at work in her classroom. Illustrations appear to have substantial importance in her class as she mentioned that the quality of cover put on a piece of writing depends upon the quality of illustrations. While Mike's view of writing in his classroom is compatible with that of his teacher, it is not complete. Mike views writing time as a continual process of writing stories, putting them into his folder until his teacher has time to see him and take one of his stories and "write it down" and then give it to a parent to type. The story is returned to him and then he finishes it by illustrating the pages. Mike reported that when his writing is finished he sometimes talks with his teacher who "makes like corrections or something like that and then she makes it like shorter". Mike's example of this was that his teacher changed his title to "Wizard Castle" from "Green Castle", which he felt was making it "shorter". Kim's version of "writing time" in her classroom is that "We write on the chalkboard and then we copy it", a view inconsistent with Janet's beliefs regarding a process approach to writing, yet consistent with some writing activities observed in the classroom. When "writing/copying" is completed, Kim reported that students get "free time" and her teacher looks at the writing later without the students present. When asked about how she knows when her writing is completed she replied that "My teacher says when to stop".

Janet encourages students to spell inventively when writing. She does give students spellings when asked and tries to work on spelling during teacher-student conferences but acknowledges that it is difficult to find time for individual conferencing. Janet uses a spelling list and test approach to the teaching of spelling, yet acknowledges that spelling is learned through use. She understands that there are sound and visual aspects to spelling. Mike senses that sometimes standard spelling is expected (like when the teacher has written the word on the board) and if you don't have immediate access to the correct spelling in the environment then "It doesn't matter because you just never saw it". Mike spells words just "how I think it is". He remembers them or looks at the print in the room. He does do some sounding out. He feels long words are difficult because they have "more silent letters". Generally, in the area of spelling, Mike's beliefs and those of his teacher are quite congruent. Kim knows that her teacher does not expect all words she writes to be spelled correctly. She feels her teacher sounds out the words to help her become a better writer. Kim's perception of her spelling strategy is that she "just sound(s) it out". When reminded by the researcher that she correctly spelled words like "like" and "my", she felt that she had remembered them. Kim appears to have beliefs regarding spelling that are consistent with her teacher.

The beliefs of Mike, the high-achiever, are more consistent with his teacher, Janet, than those of Kim, the low-acheiver. Few of Kim's beliefs were found to have much congruence with Janet's beliefs. Both Mike and Kim reported beliefs regarding the importance of writing which were inconsistent with Janet's beliefs.

Karen's Beliefs Versus the Beliefs of Alice (HA) and Lance (LA)

Karen feels that learning how to read and comprehension of what is read are the goals of the reading component of a language arts program. When asked about the most important thing about reading, Alice, a high-achiever, reported a concern with attention to and recognition of words. She explained that "You have to look at (the words). If you don't look at it [sic], you'll get the story wrong . . . if there was a story with 'at' in it and you went 'in'". Her preoccupation with word recognition surfaced again, when asked for the reasons why people read. She replied, "Because it's good for you . . . like if you didn't know what the words were and you didn't know how to read, like teachers tell you to read and you don't know how, then you'll have to stay there and sit at your desk and think what the words are". While a certain amount of word recognition is one of the necessary components in comprehension, Alice's latter comment indicates a belief in the importance of the identification of words for their own sake, a view inconsistent with her teacher, Karen. Lance, a low-achiever, reported that the most important thing about reading was writing, a belief not stated by his teacher. He stated that he likes writing more than reading. His understanding of why people read is consistent with that of Karen's, "So you learn how to read". He also mentioned that "If you can't sleep, then you call your Mom up and my [sic] Mom can read to me".

When students are experiencing difficulty identifying a word, Karen believes that both telling students the word and reminding them of strategies, such as rereading the sentence, are acceptable.

She mentioned that she doesn't want them to read "word-for-word" Karen is concerned with any miscue made in a group situation, although she acknowledges that she would not correct a miscue that preserved meaning when working with an individual child. She views phonics as one strategy that can be helpful in assisting students to identify words. Alice immediately responded that when faced with an unrecognized word, she "sound(s) it out". When probed further by the researcher, she admitted that sometimes she just skips the word. Alice's mention of these strategies demonstrates some consistency with her teacher, although Karen discussed many more strategies than those discussed by Alice. Alice further mentioned that she knows when she has made a mistake, "'cause it doesn't sound right". Lance's strategy for identifying an unrecognized word is to depend on other people as resources. He explained that "I ask my teacher and my teacher tells me and then I read the other part of the story". When probed further, regarding what he does if his teacher is busy, he replied, "Then I can ask somebody else that's in my class". His responses regarding what he does at home in similar circumstances were consistent, depending upon his brother and mother to give him the words. Lance's single strategy for identifying unrecognized words is inconsistent with his teacher's belief of reminding students of a variety of strategies. While the argument could be made that some consistency is present as Karen does identify words for children, she did not imply that this strategy should be used to the exclusion of all other strategies.

As with reading, Karen focused on the goal of writing instruction as students' gaining the ability to write to be understood. She feels students need to share ideas and be given an opporutnity to write on topics which are important and of interest to them. Alice views the most important aspect of writing as ensuring that "You don't get the letters backwards or put them upside-down". While this appears inconsistent with Karen, Alice further explained that backwards and upside-down letters could interfere with someone understanding what word she wrote. The example she gave was wanting to write an "m" and printing it upside down which makes is a "w", and if she was writing the word "melon", it would not be understood. Alice's focus on meaning in this explanation demonstrates some consistency with Karen's belief about writing to be understood. Alice's initial response to the request for reasons people write was that "Mrs. ______ wanted you to write" and went on to describe handwriting exercises. When prompted by the researcher as to reasons people might want to know how to write when they got older, she replied, "If you want to write a letter to your auntie or your grandma or your Mom and you don't know how to spell, then you can't send a letter to them . . . 'cause if you just write like scribbling, they won't know what you're saying". Lance's response regarding the most important thing about writing, was that "You get to write words and you can write about your Mom and Dad". Writing about parents is consistent with Karen's view that students should write to be understood. Lance understands that people write in order to "do something". He added that "Sometimes they don't know how to write the words and they get mixed up". When probed further about why people need to write words, he did not address the question in his response. Further responses regarding writing at school and at home indicate that Lance thinks of writing as printing letters of the alphabet more than as a functional activity.

Karen has a relatively complete understanding of the writing process and uses this knowledge in the writing component of her language arts program. When conferencing, she appears to focus on editing rather than revision and performs all duties of an "editor" (correcting surface feature of the text), while the child looks on. Alice does not acknowledge the rehearsal stage of writing. She explained writing time as "First, there's 'once upon a time' or 'once there was' and then you begin the story and sometimes you can put 'the end'". She explained that a finished piece is read to her teacher, who might then allow her to read it to the whole class. Her view of publishing is that her teacher "checks our writing to see if (the words) are wrong or right. Then, she spells, if we get a word wrong then she spells the word on top. Then we go into this place where these ladies--they let us write and we do the pictures. Then we pick out a wallpaper or two different kinds. Then she puts it in a little coil. Then we dedicate it to somebody". Overall, Alice's view of writing and that of her teacher are fairly congruent. Lance's version of writing time is that he waits until someone passes him a paper (obviously a routine established in the classroom) and then "I start writing. . . . When my teacher says that we can play, we go play". When probed further, he admitted that he reads his story to his teacher and classmates when he is finished. Lance's view of writing is different than that of his teacher as he does not embrace a process approach to writing but is dependent upon others to structure when he begins and finishes his writing.

Karen encourages students to spell inventively and will give students standard spellings of words when asked. She is cognizant of an emphasis on spelling inhibiting students willingness to write. She does use the McCracken's, Spelling Through Phonics program in her classroom. She believes that the first words students should learn how to spell are those used most often in their writing. Alice understands that her teacher does not expect that all words be spelled correctly and her other beliefs about spelling are fairly consistent as well. She is aware that her teacher will correct her spelling if a piece is going to be published. Alice has a number of strategies to encode words. She reported that she has many words "memorized" which was made possible by spelling a word "over and over again in my mind". She also commented that for some words, a dictionary is useful and for others, she associates letters to the sounds she hears in the word. Lance had difficulty expressing his ideas about spelling. He was apparently referring to the McCracken's program when he reported that spelling involves "four letters and then we put our chalkboards away and then go for lunch". He seems to see spelling and writing as two skills/activities that are not related. When probed further by the researcher to explain about spelling when he is writing a story, he replied, "Then we put them (presumably "stories") away and we get our chalkboards out and our chalks (the McCracken program)". Lance's beliefs about spelling and those of his teacher are not congruent. Lance's strategy for encoding words is to try and remember the letters in words that his Dad shows him. Lance's writing demonstrates that he is still at a prephonemic stage of spelling development and therefore, it would not be expected that he would report use of a sound-based strategy. This is somewhat unusual considering Karen's emphasis on spelling words as they sound (e.g. McCracken's program).

Generally, the beliefs of Alice, the high-achiever, tended to be consistent with those of her teacher, while the low-achiever, Lance stated beliefs that were not consistent. Some uncertainty in the congruency of the beliefs of Alice and Karen was present in reading beliefs. Of the few beliefs that Lance stated which demonstrated any consistency with those of Karen, all occurred in the area of reading.

Part 4: Congruence/Incongruence Of Teachers' Beliefs and Actions

Shelly's Beliefs and Actions

Shelly offered the belief that children should begin with meaningful whole texts and then separate language into parts if necessary. This is closely tied to another belief espoused by Shelly, that the development of phonic knowledge should take place within connected discourse. While Shelly discussed actions that were consistent with these beliefs, such as highlighting sound-symbol relationships after reading the "morning message", she also admitted to use of the program, Spelling Through Phonics, which presents sound-symbol relationships in decontextualized single words. Furthermore, she expressed that low-achievers who are part of a resource room program do a "lot of working on sight words and drilling on phonics". Reg, a high-achiever in Shelly's class, mentioned taking word lists home to practice, a behavior inconsistent with a view of the importance of "whole" text in developing students' reading abilities.

Shelly used the term "child-focused" when discussing her language arts program. Her definition of this concept is that "you are doing everything that (students) require". Generally, Shelly's actions were consistent with this belief as students had time when reading and writing to choose their own books and set their own topics for writing. Some of the time, students read pieces selected by her or wrote on topics of her choice, although often some choice was present when a topic was imposed.

Students comprehending when reading is important to Shelly. She reported not wanting students to "struggle over every word". She demonstrated consistency with these beliefs in her behavior and discussion of an event observed by the researcher. She did not correct a student for a miscue that preserved the author's meaning and stated that her reaction was the norm. She added that her students have picked-up on not correcting miscues that preserve meaning and generally know which miscues are worthy of correction (based on meaning change) when other students are reading orally. She further demonstrated consistency with this belief when discussing the relationship between word identification and comprehension, commenting that "children have to have some basic sight words, words that they can recognize right away or they will never comprehend if they're constantly trying to struggle through every single word". The focus continued to be on meaning with Shelly giving consideration to that which would facilitate successful comprehension.

Shelly mentioned the importance of having students involved in reading and writing activities daily. Her actions are consistent with this belief of the importance of "employment" as she sets aside time for "real" reading and writing activities every day. She discussed how whole language permeates the entire school day and not just the language arts time.

In the area of writing, Shelly mentioned that one of the goals of writing is that students feel like authors. Generally, her behavior is consistent with this belief as the writing process is utilized to enable students to publish books which are placed in the classroom library for all to read. Writing conferences, however, tend to deal mainly with surface features of text rather than following a focus on revision of content. Shelly's handling of editing in writing conferences with students is sometimes inconsistent, as authors have ownership and control over their writing. Shelly admitted that she alone sometimes "corrects" students' writing for publication. Also inconsistent with the concept of ownership is her stipulation that when students are writing letters to the "Superkid of the Week", they must include a question. Shelly's admission that most of the time she scribes for low-achieving students (which may foster dependence) and that these students don't publish as many books because "it's more important for (them) to come and be focused in on a few specific things rather than constantly expanding (their) writing style as the others do", does not seem consistent with an attempt to foster the feeling of "authoring" within students.

Shelly stated that spelling is developed in context, that there is "no spelling time". Her actions, mentioned previously, of developing phonic knowledge in context is consistent with this belief; however, she does not seize the opportunity to promote spelling development with individual students during editing conferences. This behavior is consistent with her comments which indicate that "function should precede form" in writing and that perhaps further spelling development is best left until the following year after they have gained some confidence in their writing ability.

Shelly believes that students are best evaluated through ongoing, daily observation. However, she reported using the Schonell Spelling Test and Basic Sight Word Test three times a year because the staff at the school in which she teaches agreed to give those tests to all students.

Generally, Shelly demonstrates a great deal of consistency between her beliefs and actions. Inconsistencies were found in the areas of phonics (especially with low-achievers) and ownership in writing. Shelly often provided a rationale for these seemingly inconsistent actions.

Leah's Beliefs and Actions

Leah believes that a whole language program is "children-based". Generally, her actions demonstrate consistency with this belief as students are given the responsibility for leading many of the activities in an established routine. Leah's description in her journal of a shared reading time further demonstrates her adherence to this belief as students are involved in a variety of self-determined activities such as reading with a partner and making up reading games. There is some question as to the input students have into the establishment of themes. The researcher witnessed students working on reports around the theme of "planets", which appeared to be an activity that was too difficult for some students.

Leah expressed the view of language learning moving from whole texts to the "parts" of language so that the children "have some idea of why they are studying these things and how they fit into the whole picture". Coupled with this, is the belief that phonic knowledge is developed within connected discourse, as Leah discussed highlighting of sound-symbol relationships within poems and stories. She admitted, however, to presenting the sounds of the alphabet in a sequential way, using the McCracken's, Spelling Though Phonics program. She rationalizes this behavior by ensuring that she follows the introduction of the letter and sound in isolation with highlighting in meaningful contexts. Leah also mentioned having students watch for the letter which was introduced, in other texts, to circle the words beginning with that letter and to draw pictures of objects which begin with the sound. While these activities may highlight awareness of the letter and sound, Leah did not mention the utility of students knowing such information and how it could be useful in other reading and writing situations; a view which would be more consistent with her concern of students understanding the reasons behind learning certain skills. Similarly, when discussing students' handwriting, Leah stated that she "nags" the students about letter formation and neatness but did not discuss the reasons why she does this or if the reasons are shared with her students. Sharing the understanding that legible handwriting is something an author does for the reader and that a certain level of automaticity in letter formation allows a writer to turn all his/her energies to the communication of thoughts and ideas would assist students in understanding the relevance of such skill development.

Leah feels that the focus of a whole language program is to "have the children reading and writing". This belief in "employment" is demonstrated in Leah's references to student activities in her journal, in which she has recorded time students spend on a daily basis involved in meaningful reading and writing activities.

Leah's wish for students to become independent readers is reflected in her actions. She has a basic understanding of the three main cueing systems used when reading and models strategies for students through cloze activities and questioning techniques when students are faced with an unrecognized word. Leah wants students to get meaning from what they read and thus ignores oral reading errors which do not alter meaning. She understands that there is more to comprehension than successful word identification and for this reason has her students discuss the story as it is being read.

Leah believes that writing needs to be purposeful for students. This belief is demonstrated in many of her actions such as students writing stories for publication and special celebrations and set writing tasks that are "real-world" activities, such as writing a "thank you note to (the Easter Bunny)". A weekly letter to the

"Sunshine Child" (special student of the week) is also a functional writing task.

Spelling is the area in which Leah demonstrates the most conflict in beliefs and actions. She commented on seeing evidence that children learn how to spell words they see and use often, yet she gives students a spelling list and test weekly. She is aware that this type of activity would not be considered consistent with whole language philosophy but rationalizes it by stating that this is her way of reaching children who learn in different ways. She feels that some students "really like having the structure and being competitive and they like knowing that they can get the words right on Friday". Interestingly, when Leah discusses evaluation of writing, she doesn't mention use of spelling tests but what the students do in their writing "from day to day".

Overall, Leah's actions are quite consistent with her beliefs. The area in which some inconsistencies arose was spelling/phonics, although some consistency in this area was present as well. Leah provided reasons for including inconsistent actions (e.g. using a spelling list/test method to reach different kinds of learners).

Diane's Beliefs and Actions

Diane stated that a whole language program is more of a "child approach rather than an adult approach". She further explained her understanding of this concept as "getting to a child in the ways in which a child learns". If this statement can be interpreted as support for the theory of "natural learning", discussed in Chapter 2, with regard to language development, other views reported by Diane demonstrate that she does not always fully embrace this view and thus her behavior is not always consistent. Beliefs that she holds may differ depending upon the achievement level of students as well. She firmly believes that low-achieving students need more phonics than promoted in a whole language program.

Diane believes that the child is at the center of a whole language program. To her, this means that a program is structured to enable each child to experience success. Diane reported that once a week each student reads in front of the class. This may or may not be an activity which is structured to enable all students to experience success. She acknowledges the developmental aspect of learning language. She stated that teachers know the skills and knowledge that students possess and must help them to develop from that point. Although Diane reported these beliefs, she also mentioned that it is important for all students to "feel that they're doing okay even if according to adult standards they're not". If one accepts that students develop at individual rates, that language learning is developmental, and stages of reading and writing development have been observed and recorded, then any stage of development that a child is "in" should be acceptable to adults. A further example of her difficulty in accepting this view was demonstrated through a discussion surrounding "non-readers" (her term) in her classroom as they were not yet reading unpredictable texts independently, although they could read "easy pattern books". Also, she found it difficult to justify that her low-achieving student, Bob, should be allowed to take the same book home more than twice as he would "know it by memory" after that point. This leads to the conclusion that she either does not see the value in repeated readings of the same text or her belief in exposing children to a variety of literature takes precedence (at least in this situation).

Diane is concerned with students' ability to read and sees that as the goal of reading instruction. Her understanding of this notion is that students can independently make sense of a piece of writing. She feels that knowledge of sight words helps students to both identify words when reading and encode words when writing and that students should "first learn to recognize the words and then be able to put them together to make sense of them". While contrary to whole language philosophy, Diane uses these beliefs as a justification for having students work on sight word development in isolation. In groups of three, they drill each other on various words. The goal to create independent readers is not always consistent with Diane's actions as she pinpoints strategies for students that they should use to correct a miscue or identify a word, rather than helping students examine the strategies they have and identifying those which might be more helpful in the particular situation. She groups students according to their ability level for reading instruction, which does not provide low-achieving students with models of fluent, successful reading behavior.

Diane feels that whole language allows children to approximate adult standards. This appears easier for her to accept in the area of reading than writing. She feels that even though students may be able to communicate meaning through words they have spelled inventively, correct spelling is still of great importance. She uses a spelling list and test method with students to address this concern with standard spelling. She has noted that students don't always transfer learning from the spelling test situation to other contexts, such as journal writing, and openly wondered how that development could be fostered.

Diane has a partial understanding of the stages of writing development. She stated that children progress "from scribbling to copying a word to drawing a story, to saying the story, to sounding out the words, to printing what they know without sounding out . . .". Some of the writing activities present in her classroom, such as journal writing, acknowledge these stages, while others, such as copying poems at the poem center, do not. She stated that her reason for providing this center is to expose students to another literary form as she generally doesn't present much poetry in class. She had hoped that the students would write their own poetry but as they weren't she felt that copying was "okay".

Diane expressed a belief that students should understand the purposes for writing. One example of functional writing used in the class is the "publication" of a weekly newsletter to parents, sharing individual students "news" for that week. Many of the writing activities assigned in the classroom, however, lack "real-world" purposes for her students. Copying poems in the poems center is one example. She described writing as students taking some of "the sight words that they learned and that they can put them down like a puzzle piece, and making sentences out of these words that they've learned to spell". No mention was made of the communicative function of writing. In the area of spelling, to remain consistent, it would be expected that Diane would want students to understand the reasons for developing their spelling ability (to improve their ability to communicate through a written medium) rather than expressing a belief that "the only time (correct spelling) matters is on the spelling test".

Generally, Diane's beliefs and actions are fairly inconsistent. In her discussion of some of the whole language beliefs, it became apparent that although she knows and espouses certain beliefs, she has not fully accepted them for herself or her students.

Irene's Beliefs and Actions

Irene believes that "the child and their [sic] development" is the focus of a whole language program. Most of her actions are consistent with this view as demonstrated in her discussion of how she organizes for students of different achievement levels. She explained that open-ended centers and activities are planned to allow children to gravitate to a level which challenges yet does not frustrate them. Based on her knowledge of students, Irene will also differentiate in how she approaches the same activity with individual students. When discussing the morning message, she volunteered that "I might ask Jake what goes 'buh' (and) I might ask Nancy to find the compound words". A further example of congruence with the concept that students and their individual development is the focus of the program is the individual spelling program, based on students' writing, in place in the classroom. Of further note, is

Irene's advocacy for students, especially low-achievers. When asked why her low-achiever wasn't doing as well as her high-achiever, she replied that "Jake is doing as well as Nancy (because) Jake is showing more than a year's growth since he came in (to the class)". She is thinking of development in relative terms, is accepting of Jake's level of development, and reported being confident that he would become "a fluent reader and writer like Nancy is". There are a couple of situations disclosed by Irene, however, which appear inconsistent with a child-centered belief. While she acknowledges that students often generate their own writing topics, she reported that when students are working on independent study projects in curricular areas such as science, she assigns the topic. She feels that they have input indirectly as she bases her selection on knowing the students' interests. Another example inconsistent with a child-focus is Irene's control over which pieces of writing a student will publish. She admitted that she feels like "the judge" and that students wait for her "final approval" on whether or not a piece is "ready yet". She revealed that she feels "confused" about this aspect of students' writing.

Irene stated a belief that phonics is "just one way of attacking a word" and should be developed in context. Actions observed by the researcher and reported by Irene support this conviction. When describing her reaction to students' miscues, she used the child as informant (further support for her espoused child-centered belief) in asking the child, "What are you going to do now?" She then went on to discuss possible strategies the students might state or those that she could demonstrate. She mentioned "look(ing) at it phonetically" as one of several options. The researcher witnessed group activities with whole texts, such as books or the morning message, during which Irene seized the opportunity to highlight various word parts (e.g. "ful", "tion", "ing" endings) present in text words.

Irene is concerned that students develop a love of literature and reported this as the most important aspect of the reading component of a whole language program. She did not report any inconsistent actions with this belief. She discussed the importance of students having the opportunity to read, discuss and critique literature. She encourages reading of literature through a nightly home-reading program and reads to the students daily. She also allows students who wish to read a story to the class the opportunity to do so after they have practiced and polished their oral reading of that text.

Irene reported the use of a process approach to writing in her classroom and a desire for students to write in the "pursuit of learning" and for enjoyment. Much of the writing students do, as reported by Irene, was of this nature. She mentioned the use of Power Writing techniques, however, a highly structured approach to expository writing in which meaning is subservient to form. Obviously, this approach which places form before meaning, is inconsistent with a philosophy that views construction of meaning as the primary goal of reading and writing. Irene did not elaborate on her understanding nor use of these techniques and thus definitive conclusions regarding the congruence/incongruence of her behavior in this area and beliefs about writing are not possible.

Interestingly, she commented in her journal that she is concerned with "what sometimes happens to destroy the spontaneity and freshness of (students' writing). They almost seem to become victims of the teachers who begin to look for specific formulas in writing and criticize when they don't produce".

Irene feels that students need time to "practice" reading and writing in order to develop their competency in written language. She reported allotting 40 to 45 minutes each day for writing and as discussed previously provides students with numerous opportunities for interacting with books throughout the school day. The classroom is very activity-based with a great percentage of the time spent in purposeful reading and writing activities.

Although Irene discussed the strategies readers can use to identify an unrecognized word when reading in connected discourse, she behaves in an inconsistent manner when she asks students to read words on the Dolch word list periodically as a way to "show the parents the accumulation of growth in actual sight words and then I explain to them, that's only one way of reading". Evaluating word identification abilities with isolated words does not provide the context which allows students to use the strategies (based on the cueing systems) Irene admitted she tries to develop. She did report, however, that in three way conferences (teacher/parent/child) she does have the student read, although the material used was not disclosed.

Irene's beliefs and actions are generally quite congruent. In some of the few cases where beliefs and actions appeared inconsistent, Irene demonstrated that she had some understanding that the actions were not quite consistent with her beliefs (e.g. feeling confused about giving direction/taking over control of a piece of writing in the writing conference), although she could state other reasons for her actions.

Janet's Beliefs and Actions

Janet revealed a belief that reading should be taught "through usage". To support her belief, she gave examples from her classroom where phonics skills and word identification strategies were taught within the context of "whole" text. Janet views phonics and spelling development as related and reported a belief that spelling also develops through use "more than anything". She has a separate spelling program, however, which involves children memorizing words from a word list and being tested formally each week. Consistency in behavior with this belief is demonstrated by Janet's emphasis on the home-reading program which she stated is a "definite necessity" as it gets "kids reading more". While she did admit, in her journal, to using some workbook pages, she spoke of selecting pages based on whether or not the "exercise" took place within a context. In Janet's journal entries, a great deal of time spent chanting and rereading texts is noted, consistent with the view of teaching (and learning) language while using language. As well as using language, Janet believes that beginning readers need repetitive vocabulary. She feels that organizing around a theme enables her to repeat words frequently, something which the newer basal series she has, Impressions, does not do.

The child as the focus of a whole language program is another of Janet's beliefs. Many of her actions in the classroom demonstrate congruence with this view. She discussed that when students are having difficulty selecting a topic, she speaks with them about their life experiences and let's them know that "that's something you can write about". She realizes that students are at different levels of achievement and so scribes for low-achieving students so they can experience authorship. She listens to individual children read and notes the strategies that they are using. She also has individual conferences with students regarding their writing, but experiences frustration at not having enough uninterrupted time to spend with individuals. In writing conferences, Janet reported that "(the students) come and tell me what they want me to talk with them (about)". Two somewhat inconsistent behaviors with a child-centered view are Janet's selection of themes, with no reported input or "shaping" of the content from the children, although she mentioned that she tries to get the students interested, and the use of a structured spelling program which Janet admitted "not all children are ready for".

Janet has a belief that comprehension is the goal of reading. Her behavior in this area is quite consistent. She does not correct miscues which preserve meaning and attempts to help students develop strategies for identifying text words. She is aware that comprehension involves more than just word identification but did not explain how word identification leads to comprehension.

Janet believes that having students write frequently and for a purpose are two important goals of a writing program. In her journal, Janet demonstrated that students having the opportunity to write is important as she has scheduled daily writing times. Some evidence of purposeful writing is found throughout Janet's interview and journal as she discussed her students reading their stories to their penpals (another class in the school) and writing to her in journal form once a week.

While Janet demonstrated several actions consistent with her beliefs, some were also inconsistent. Activities in the spelling/phonics area contributed to this incongruency the most.

Karen's Beliefs and Actions

Karen's interpretation of whole language is that it is "using the children's experiences and their ideas out in print so that it becomes more meaningful for them". Karen's actions are both consistent and inconsistent with her understanding of "child-centered" and the definition found in whole language literature. Although she selects the themes to be used in the classroom, Karen attempts to ensure that they are of interest to the children. Interest in her selection of "frogs" as a theme was heightened by the arrival of frogs' eggs into the classroom. Karen uses open-ended activities to enable children of different ability levels to gravitate to their own level. She tries to be responsive to the students' requests as when the researcher observed one child asking to change a word in a chant that the class had just completed. Karen agreed that this would be done the next time they read the poem. The students are encouraged to write about their life experiences in their daily journal writing time. Karen provides students with time to share writing ideas before beginning the drafting stage. Karen demonstrated some inconsistency with a child-centered view when she commented that she doesn't modify her approach for either high- or low-achievers as she "teach(es) the program". Also, she feels it is necessary to sometimes assign writing topics as she wants to have input into the vocabulary. As she explained, "we can't leave it to chance that what they're going to write is going to be something that they read and then they become readers because of that". Obviously, she still feels a need for a certain amount of teacher control over activities or the children may not learn. Karen reported using the McCracken's, Spelling Through Phonics program as a whole class activity which is not child-centered if consideration is given to those students, such as Lance, who do not yet understand the alphabetic principle, as well as those students who are beyond the need for more exposure to sound/symbol relationships. Interestingly, Karen believes that having children divided into ability groupings in the afternoon for further reading instruction by another teacher is consistent with a child-centered as she wants "those children who are high readers not be showing up nor slowed up by the children who are not reading at that level". No mention is made of the effect of the stigma involved in being in the "slow group".

Karen discussed the need to make reading and writing purposeful for the students and her actions are generally compatible with this belief. She uses a morning message activity daily and highlighted that this message gives students information that they will need regarding their day at school. She also strives to make writing purposeful for students as demonstrated by the requirement that students "write-up" what they wish to say about their show and tell "item" before presenting it to the class. Publishing is part of the writing process in this class and students know that writing pieces may be taken to a final, published stage and shared with classmates.

Karen believes in giving children supportive contexts in which to read. She stated that she wants to "make it easy for the children to learn to read and give them all of the clues . . . I don't just believe in putting print on the board, I have a lot of pictures with mine". Although she espoused this belief, when discussing evaluation, Karen mentioned using a sight word list to check on the development of sight vocabulary. The inconsistency present in this situation reflects the view that evaluation should be consistent with the way in which children naturally learn language. Furthermore, if Karen believes in making learning to read "easy" for children, in order to be consistent, the same philosophy should be extended to making a situation as "easy" (where the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of language are intact) for evaluation.

Karen feels that the goal of reading is comprehension. She further acknowledges that sight words and "attack skills" lead to comprehension, although she did not elaborate on how this occurs. She demonstrated an inconsistency with the goal of reading being comprehension, however, when discussing students' oral reading miscues. She insists on perfect word identification by students when reading in large group situations and corrects their miscues even if they are meaningful. This action would appear to indicate that to Karen correct word identification is at least as important a goal as comprehension.

Karen views language learning as not a part to whole process. She supported this understanding by stating that teaching skills, such as phonics, in context makes "more sense than now we're going to read this passage and then we're going to spell these little words and then we're going to put "b's" at the front of all these words". She demonstrated development of skills in the various whole texts utilized throughout the school day, such as the morning message and singing of songs printed on large charts. The McCracken spelling program used by Karen, however, does set out to develop sound/letter correspondences through isolated words. A statement made by Karen when discussing the relationship between whole language and phonics indicated a part to whole concept. She stated that the McCracken program was a "way to start getting them to look at the alphabet and getting to know the sounds". Furthermore, Karen admitted that toward the end of the school year, low-achieving students who will be continuing on in grade one next year, are coloring all the "s" words on a page, in order to make them "happier" and reduce their frustration with reading.

Karen's beliefs and actions demonstrate a fairly equal amount of consistency and inconsistency. She stated certain beliefs, such as promoting a child-centered program, yet a substantial amount of teacher control remains present in the classroom, leading to the conclusion that she either does not completely understand all the ramifications of the belief or is not yet able to fully embrace all the aspects of a child-centered belief. While often Karen provided a rationale for those actions inconsistent with her beliefs, she sometimes did not as in the case of correcting meaningful miscues in a group situation.

Summary

Students' reports of their beliefs about reading determined that among high- and low-achieving students there was little agreement and understanding regarding the teacher's role in teaching students to read. The most frequent responses involved having the teacher read to students and students read to the teacher. Information regarding the student's role in learning how to read centered on strategies students employed when reading and their awareness of the functions of reading. All high-achieving students reported using a "sound it out" strategy as well as skipping the word or reading ahead and returning to the word as strategies used when faced with an unrecognized word. Low-achievers' responses did not exhibit the same amount of agreement. The most agreement was found on using a "sound it out" strategy, reported by three students. High-achievers reported more functional uses of reading than low-achievers, who tended to view the purpose of reading to increase one's ability to read and write.

An analysis of students' behaviors when reading indicated that high-achievers tended to use meaning-based cues, such as syntactic and semantic acceptability, integrated with an adequate amount of print-based cues when predicting words. Low-achievers tended to rely more on graphic cues to predict words and were not as successful as high-achievers at integrating these cues with meaning-based cues. This resulted in low-achievers' miscues having greater substantial change in the author's meaning. An analysis of the degree of monitoring by high- and low-achievers indicated little difference between the two groups, leading to the conclusion that students of varying ability levels are receiving the message to "correct miscues" as they are engaged in reading.

Overall, high-achievers demonstrated more consistency in their behavior and reported strategies when identifying words, than did low-achievers. When identifying words, all high-achievers and half of the low-achievers reported associating sounds to letters, consistent with their behavior as determined by the analysis of graphic similarity between students' miscues and text words. While both high- and low-achieving students reported some use of context in identifying words, high-achievers were more successful at predicting words which were syntactically and semantically acceptable.

When spelling, five high-achievers reported that they use sound-based strategies and all high-achievers reported use of print-based strategies. More low-achievers reported use of sound-based strategies than print-based strategies. Four high-achieving students reported rereading their writing (monitoring) to ensure it was sensible, while two high-achievers and one low-achiever reported correcting spelling errors. Overall, low-achievers did not appear to be as aware of the need for monitoring when writing compared with high-achievers and to monitoring when reading. Most students could give a functional use of writing, but generally this response was limited to one example.

An analysis of students' spelling strategies on spelling errors in their writing piece indicated that while both high- and low-achievers use both sound- and print-based spelling strategies, high-achievers used print-based strategies more often than low-achievers. This is consistent with students' reports on spelling strategies as only three low-achievers reported use of print-based strategies while all high-achievers reported their use. Five high-achievers and five low-achievers reported use of sound-based strategies, demonstrating consistency with their actions.

Teachers reported that generally high- and low-achieving students receive the same language arts program although modifications in the program were made. More program differentiation reportedly occurred for low-achieving students than high-achievers. The most frequent responses regarding differentiation for low-achievers was the use of a resource room program, an emphasis on reading skills, adults providing individual assistance, continuing in the same grade the following year, and a greater attempt to build students' self-confidence. The most frequently stated reasons for students' differential achievement was the degree of support in the home, the developmental stage or level of maturity of the child, and personality traits.

A comparison of individual teachers' beliefs and those of their students indicated more congruence between a high-achiever's beliefs and those of his/her teacher's than those of a low-achiever and his/her teacher. Interestingly, not all high-achievers' beliefs were consistently in agreement with those of their teachers. Some of this incongruence, however, may find its roots in a teacher's inconsistent behavior. For example, Alice, Karen's high-achiever, views reading as more of an exact word recognition process than a comprehension process as reported by Karen. Some of Karen's actions, however, such as correcting meaningful miscues, would support Alice's "correct word identification" view of reading.

Both consistency and inconsistency were found when comparing teachers' beliefs and actions. Sometimes teachers were aware of the seemingly inconsistent nature of their actions and revealed other factors which they had considered when making instructional decisions. The varying amount of congruence between beliefs and actions among the six teachers indicate their relative positions on a continuum from novice to expert regarding the degree of control over understanding whole language and teaching from within that philosophy.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains a brief summary of the study and presents conclusions based upon a synthesis of the research results. Many of the research findings have implications for stakeholders in education, including whole language teachers, administrators, those involved in the professional development of both practicing and pre-service teachers, and educational theorists. The final section of the chapter offers suggestions for further research in the area.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to describe six grade one teachers' theoretical and operational beliefs about whole language and to compare beliefs among teachers and to those beliefs expressed in the related literature. The study also described six high-achieving and six low-achieving students' beliefs about reading and writing, their behaviors when involved in reading and writing, and the extent to which a teacher's beliefs were congruent with those of her students.

Interviews with teachers and students, teachers' self-reports (journal format), and the collection of a reading and writing sample from each student provided data for analysis. The researcher observed a teacher-selected language arts "time" in each teacher's classroom prior to any data collection. The observation enabled the researcher to form context-specific questions for each teacher which were then asked in the follow-up interview. Teacher and student interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, categorized, and tabulated. Journal data was also coded and provided additional, supporting, and sometimes discrepant information to that established in interviews.

Conclusions

1. There is great variability in what "whole language" means to teachers, although some commonalities exist.

Support for this conclusion is found in the lack of agreement of teachers' responses to many questions regarding the various facets of whole language. As Irene stated, "whole language doesn't really mean anything because of all the different interpretations of what it is". Fagan (1989) feels that "it is perhaps unfortunate that the label Whole Language, rather than a more generic term such as 'good teaching' was ever coined" (p. 17).

2. Teachers use intuition, common sense, and situational variables in devising a language arts program.

While generally teachers made decisions about their language arts program consistent with their beliefs about whole language, they also made references to basing decisions and/or behaviors on criteria other than beliefs. The results of a study reported by both Buike and Duffy (1979) and Bawden et al. (1979) are consistent with these findings. Bawden et al. (1979) found that "teachers did, when explaining instructional decisions, make enough reading statements to indicate that they possess reading conceptions and, in most cases, their observed behavior and time use tended to reflect their statements" (p. 6). They also found, however, that "teachers also explain their instructional decisions with categorizable statements that represent 'non-reading conceptions'" (p. 10). Other factors reported as affecting a teacher's reading conception were the grade level taught and the ability level of students. The conclusion drawn by Buike and Duffy (1979) was that

> reading conceptions and instructional practices are not related in a simple, linear way . . .. The relationship between a teacher's reading beliefs and his/her instructional decision-making appears to be fluid; a teacher's conception of reading is a 'free-floating' element which has little meaning until it is filtered through the teacher's non-reading conceptions and is applied to (a) specific teaching context (p. 11).

3. Levels of expertise (ie. from novice to expert) exist among teachers in their understanding of whole language.

This conclusion is supported by the work of Buike and Duffy (1979) and Bawden et al. (1979). Bawden et al. concluded that "some teachers possess more complex (reading) conceptions than others. This complexity is seen both in the number of conceptions a teacher espouses and in the number of statements the teacher generates to support each conception" (p. 11). Furthermore, knowledge levels (beginning/introductory and advanced) of teachers as discussed by Fagan (1989) are supported in this study. On a knowledge level continuum from introductory (novice) to advanced (expert), Shelly would be placed toward the advanced end while Diane's placement would be closer to the introductory end.

4. Levels of expertise exist within each teacher's understanding and delivery of the different facets (e.g. reading, spelling, writing process, etc.) of a whole language program.

Teachers often demonstrated considerable knowledge and understanding of beliefs found in the literature in one area of whole language, yet in other area would state beliefs and behaviors which demonstrated little consistency with the literature. This is supported by Morris and Fagan (1987) who found that while "different orientations (including whole language) are distinguishable by the practices in which teachers engage" (p. 81), "the practices of the whole language teachers did not possess internal consistency" (p. 82).

5. Whole language teachers are more versed in writing than reading.

Teachers were able to articulate a more complete and accurate view of writing than reading within a whole language philosophy. The difference between teachers' understandings of writing process as opposed to reading process was one significant example.

6. For some whole language teachers, there is a belief that low-achieving students require more emphasis on non-whole language activities, such as isolated skills instruction, than average and high-achieving students.

Some of the teachers in the study reported that low-achievers were deficient in "basic skills", such as phonic knowledge. To address this need, they arranged (e.g. resource room pull-out, skills worksheets) for drill on "reading skills", often while other higher-achieving students carried out activities more consistent with a whole language philosophy. Malicky and Norman (1988) argue that whole language is "most crucial for those learners who have made the least progress in learning to read and write both because they are clearly outside the mainstream culture and because they often don't realize that reading and writing are communication processes" (p. 20). They are concerned that most resource (remedial) programs focus initially on print rather than moving to this focus after the meaningfulness of written language is understood by children; thus, establishing a reason for identifying words. Although letter, sound, and word knowledge provide access to meaning, focusing on this knowledge prior to children's development of an understanding of its utility, frequently results in confusion (Malicky & Norman, 1988).

7. High-achieving students tend to possess more of a whole language orientation than low-achieving students.

Generally, high-achievers, more than low-achievers, tended to state beliefs and engage in behaviors consistent with a whole language philosophy. For example, responses to the question regarding the importance of reading revealed that high-achievers view reading as significant because it is language used to "do something" (e.g. entertain or inform), whereas low-achievers see the importance of reading as a way to improve their reading ability.

8. Teachers' beliefs tend to be more congruent with those of their high-achieving student than low-achieving student.

This conclusion is supported by the the work of Harste and Burke (1977) who showed that when asked to select achieving students, teachers were inclined to choose those whose behavior reflected their own beliefs. This led to the assumption that teachers would select as a low-achieving student, a student whose behavior was not consistent with their beliefs about good readers and writers and generally this was the case. It appeared that in those instances where the beliefs of a low-achieving student and his/her teacher were fairly consistent (although still not as consistent as the high-achiever) the student, while still functioning at a lower level of achievement than other students in the class, was beginning to use strategies and behaviors more consistent with the teacher's beliefs.

9. While low-achieving students are less likely than high-achievers to possess whole language beliefs as defined in the literature, their beliefs tend to be consistent with their teachers' beliefs about developing the reading abilities of low-achievers.

As mentioned previously, some teachers expressed the view that low-achievers require more of a focus on "skill development", especially in reading, and thus structure activities for those students consistent with these beliefs. Generally, low-achievers have adopted a view of reading encouraged by the exposure to such activities, resulting in beliefs that are not consistent with whole language philosophy, yet are consistent with teachers' beliefs about reading development for low-achievers.

Implications

Implications For Whole Language Teachers

1. The variability in teachers' understanding of whole language suggests that the use of the term "whole language" among teachers may not be helpful in communicating precise understandings of beliefs or actions based upon this philosophy.

2. The potential influence of a teachers' beliefs and actions on students' concepts and strategy use when reading and writing, suggests that increased awareness of this relationship among whole language teachers is imperative. Teachers need to be aware of their beliefs and the consistency/inconsistency of their actions and the impact of these factors on students' written language development.

3. Teachers need to take opportunities to increase their understanding of whole language beliefs and actions consistent with those beliefs. This involves 1) time to reflect on their beliefs and actions, 2) to read and discuss theory and practice as it relates to whole language with other whole language teachers, in order to refine and shape their personal constructs of whole language, and may include 3) opportunities to receive feedback from consultants, who are expert in the field of whole language, on actions viewed in the classroom.

4. Specifically, teachers need to develop a greater understanding of the needs of low-achievers, especially in the area of reading, and to develop their teaching abilities in order to address these students' needs. Professional development sessions which

focus on the reading process and interactive nature of the four cueing systems is the place to start, to enable teachers to establish where breakdowns in the reading process are occurring with individual students. Naturally, subsequent sessions would need to focus on developing teaching strategies which are tailored to the individual needs of students as determined through the aforementioned assessment.

Implications For Administrators

1. Due to the variability in teachers' understanding of whole language, the philosophy, itself, cannot be blamed for what some people interpret as a decrease in the literacy skills of children.

2. Teachers need opportunities for professional development. Ideally, this would involve inservicing on various facets of whole language, followed by in-class observation and discussion/coaching by "experts" in the field of children's written language development. The opportunity for teachers to gather together to discuss successes, failures, interpretations, and confusions surrounding theory or attempts to implement theory are encouraged.

Implications For Those Involved in Teacher Education/Professional Development

1. The finding that whole language teachers are more versed in writing than reading suggests that inservice series and curriculum and instruction courses should be designed to give more attention to

facilitating teachers' understanding of reading and ways to foster reading development within a whole language program. This finding is most likely a reflection of the recent emphasis on understanding new theory and research in writing development. Unarguably, this emphasis was warranted, as for many years writing was second to reading as a subject of theory and research and little progress was made in the area. Now, however, there is some indication that the emphasis needs to be returned to reading, with a focus on developing teacher's understanding of reading and its development.

2. Teachers in the study expressed concern and discussed their attempts to differentiate their whole language programs for low-achieving students, especially in reading. Some teachers felt that these students lacked "basic skills" and thus they were given more drill on phonics and other skills. This demonstrates that teachers perceive the special needs of low-achievers but believe that the ways to address those needs are through behaviors inconsistent with whole language philosophy, such as isolated practice on sound-letter relationships. This suggests that whole language teachers need courses and inservices to assist them in understanding the difficulties of low-achievers, where breakdowns in processing are occurring, and how to best remediate the difficulties being experienced by each child.

3. Since teachers acknowledged that they base instructional decisions on factors other than their beliefs, the need for assistance in operationalizing these beliefs/theory in their classrooms can be seen. The giving of information in inservices, workshops, or classes is not enough to effect change in the classroom. Consultants and

those supervising the practicum experiences of pre-service teachers need to work with teachers in their classrooms, discussing actions observed and decisions made. These conferences should focus on the reasoning behind the decisions and actions, in order to help teachers raise to an awareness level their belief network and inconsistencies with that network.

Implications For Educational Theorists

1. There is evidence which suggests that when devising a language arts program, teachers integrate theory and other situational variables, generally resulting in an adaptation (not adoption) of theory. Since effective programs and teachers are known to exist, by their presence in educational literature, it may be time to consider the generation of theory based on effective practice rather than attempting to make practice fit pre-established theory.

Recommendations for Further Research

If, as discussed in Chapter 1, teachers are the most influential factor in determining students' success or failure, much more research is warranted on the effect of teachers' beliefs about language arts programming, the influence of those beliefs on their actions, and the interplay between language arts beliefs and other belief systems (e.g. discipline) held by a teacher. The following research suggestions encourage further study of these issues.

1. A case-study approach would allow for more in-depth data collection and analysis of a teacher's network of beliefs. More than one high- and low-achieving student could be selected to determine the consistency between a teacher's beliefs and his/her students' beliefs.

2. Studies which focus on understanding teachers' beliefs and how those beliefs relate to practice are necessary in order to better understand the influence of beliefs on instructional decision-making. This could be accomplished by establishing teachers' beliefs, observing teachers-in-action in the classroom, and as a result of this observation, discussing the apparent incongruencies in beliefs and actions. This discussion would lead to a more complete understanding of teachers' belief networks and might enable increased understanding of the impediments to implementation of whole language programs consistent with the description found in the literature.

3. To provide a more complete picture of teachers' beliefs about whole language, a similar study could be designed in which the purpose is to determine teachers' and students' beliefs about either the oral or visual literacy aspects of whole language, rather than the written aspect which was a focus of this study.

4. Repeating the study, using different methods of data collection, such as a critical-incident method, would enable the determination of the influence of data collection procedures on the findings.

5. Occasionally responses in the study from both teachers and students were neither complete nor precise enough to draw

definitive conclusions. A study which was designed to provide teachers and students with fixed statements, such as found on the Teachers' Orientation to Reading Profile, after interviews had occurred would allow the researcher an additional check on the completeness and accuracy of teachers' and students' beliefs. Discrepancies could be discussed at follow-up interviews.

6. The use of teacher journals as a form of data collection, intended to provide more information and act as a check on information forthcoming from other areas (ie. one aspect of triangulation) was not as successful as hoped. The researcher provided teachers with explicitly stated expectations for journal entries. Few of them, however, included reflections following the report of daily activities in their language arts classroom as requested. Journals have been shown to be a useful form of data collection and if included in the data collection of another study of this nature, it is suggested that teachers be given more structure in how to complete a journal entry and/or an example/model be provided to demonstrate the type of information being sought.

7. The main focus of this study was teachers' beliefs. The information collected on students' beliefs and actions and used to determine congruency/incongruency with teachers' beliefs was limited. A study focusing on students' beliefs and reading/writing behaviors in a whole language environment would provide more complete profiles of students.

8. The influence of the home environment was revealed as students discussed some of the strategies in which they engaged (e.g. Bob's use of "saying the letters in a word" as a strategy to

identify words). Thus, a study designed to look at the influences of the home environment on a student's concept of reading and formation of reading strategies, as well as focusing on the student's ability to integrate information about reading from both the home and school environments is needed to more fully understand how children arrive at their understanding of written language.

Conclusion

The study's primary purpose was to describe teachers' beliefs of whole language theory and practice. Although some commonalities in teachers' beliefs were found, great variability in the meaning of whole language among teachers appears to exist. Another purpose of the study was to determine high- and low-achieving students' beliefs about reading and writing. As with teachers, while some commonalities in beliefs were present, a substantial amount of variability in beliefs among students was found. All students held some beliefs which were consistent with those of their teacher, although high-achieving students' beliefs demonstrated more consistency. While cause-effect relationships regarding teachers' and students' beliefs cannot be determined from the study, the degree of congruence of teachers' and students' beliefs suggests that teachers' beliefs may affect the beliefs and therefore, the reading and writing strategies of students. Thus, whole language teachers' (especially those of young children) professional responsibility to reach advanced levels of knowledge (Fagan, 1989) regarding the nature of language and literacy, and the teaching/learning of written language for students of all ability levels cannot be understated, especially if as Margaret Meek (1982) states, "The view of reading a child accepts is the one his first teacher gives him"(p. 19).

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APPENDIX A

Contact Summary Sheet

Site ______________________________

Teacher ___________________________

Date ______________________________

1. Description of classroom.

2. Description of lesson/activity observed (include materials/objectives).

3. Describe the nature of classroom interaction.

4. Key statements about reading and writing made by students and teacher.

5. Follow-up questions to be asked in interview.

APPENDIX B

Teacher Interview Schedule

Background Information

Tell me about the following:

___ teacher education
___ reading/writing/language courses taken at university
___ teaching career (years and grade levels taught, location)
___ history of interest and involvement in "whole language"
___ most influential factors on your development as a "whole language" teacher
___ is there one book, article, event that sticks out in your mind as having a significant impact on your development as a "whole language" teacher?

Introduction to Remainder of Interview

"Whole language" is a very visible phenomenon within our schools at the present time. However, there appears to be a variety of views of what "whole language" is. I am hoping to gain an understanding of some teachers and students' views about "whole language".

What I am going to do is get you to talk about your beliefs about whole language, the language arts teaching you do, and the sorts of things which guide you in teaching the way you do I don't want to influence you with specific questions, so I'd like you to tell me as much as you can about what "whole language" means to you.

When you have said all you can off the top of your head, then I will prompt you with further questions. So when you're ready please begin telling me about what "whole language" is to you.

___ When you think of "whole language", what does the word "whole" mean to you?

___ Tell me about the focus of a whole language program.

___ How does "whole language" relate to phonics

___ literature

___ other aspects of the curriculum?

___ What role do parents have in a whole language program?

___ What does the term "process" mean to you with respect to "whole language"?

___ (Do you also relate "process" to reading?)

___ (Do you also relate "process" to writing?)

___ What is the most important aspect of the reading component of a "whole language" program?

___ What materials form the basis of the reading component of your language arts program?

___ When reading and a child stumbles or doesn't know a word, how do you interpret this within a "whole language" philosophy?

___ What is the relationship between word recognition and comprehension?

___ What is the relationship between active involvement in reading and tasks assigned after the reading task, such as answering questions?

___ What is the overall goal of the reading component of a "whole language" program?

___ What is the most important aspect of the writing component of a "whole language" program?

___ What materials form the basis of the writing component of your language arts program?

___ How are writing topics chosen?

___ Tell me about the sequence of the writing act in terms of how it is brought to its completion.

___ How does "whole language" relate to spelling
___ punctuation
___ grammar
___ handwriting?

___ What is the overall goal of the writing component of a "whole language" program?

___ What beliefs do "whole language" teachers usually possess about how young children are able to develop competency in written language?

___ What type of environment or conditions are conducive to a child's learning?

___ What kind of environment or conditions would assist you in having the "whole language" program that you want?

___ How is evaluation usually handled in a "whole language" program?

___ Is there anything else I haven't mentioned that you would like to say about "whole language"?

Operational beliefs

___ I'd like you to tell me the names of the two students in your class that you selected for the study based on the criteria outlined in the memo you received (first year in grade one, with you all year, Canadian-born/native English speakers, not reading independently upon entering grade one, and relatively articulate/outgoing)

____________________	____________________
high-achieving	low-achieving

___ Do you feel __________ and __________ are exposed to the same type of language arts program?

(If not)

___ Tell me about how you would approach reading and writing with them. What aspects would be the same/different?

(If so)

___ Tell me about how you approach reading and writing with __________ and __________.

___ Why is __________ doing so well?

___ Why is __________ not doing as well as __________ ?

___ How can you help __________ to catch up with __________ ?

APPENDIX C

Student Interview Schedule

Procedure

1. Informal Talk
2. Oral Reading Sample (a or b)
    - a) Bader Reading and Language Inventory
        - read silently, read orally, recall, comprehension questions/inference question, processing questions (from Supplementary Questions)
    - b) Predictable Book
        - listen to examiner read, read orally, recall, processing questions (from Supplementary Questions)
3. Reading Component Questions

____ What kinds of things do you read in class? Who picks them?

____ Tell me about what you do in reading time.

____ What does your teacher do to help you become a better reader?

____ What do you do if you don't recognize (can't get) a word when you're reading?

____ What is the most important thing about reading?

____ What is the teacher's main job in teaching you how to read?

____ What do you do after you are finished reading something?

____ Why do people read?

____ Why do you read in school?

____ Do you read at home? (If yes, what kinds of things do you read?)

____ Is reading at home any different from reading at school?

____ What do your Mom and Dad say about your reading?

4. Writing Sample

- before writing - questions
- tracking
- process questions

5. Writing Component Questions

____ How do you know what to write about?

____ Tell me about what you do in writing time.

____ What does your teacher do to help you become a better writer?

____ What does your teacher say about spelling
punctuation
what you say
the way you make letters?

____ How do you know what letters to put down when you want to write a word?

____ What is the most important thing about writing?

____ How do you know when your writing is finished?

____ What do you do with your writing when it's finished?

____ Why do people write?

____ Why do you write in school?

____ Do you write at home? (If yes, what kinds of things do you write?)

____ Is writing at home any different from writing at school?

____ What do your Mom and Dad say about your writing?

APPENDIX D

Miscue Analysis Coding Form

Student ______________________ Teacher ______________________

Level/ Miscue Number	Miscue	Text	Graphic Similarity			Phonic Similarity			Syntactic Acceptability			Semantic Acceptability			Meaning Change		
			Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N	Y	P	N
___/1																	
___/2																	
___/3																	
___/4																	
___/5																	
___/6																	
___/7																	
___/8																	
___/9																	
___/10																	
Totals																	
Percentages																	

APPENDIX E

Spelling Error Coding Form

Student ____________________ Teacher ______________________

Standard Spelling	Student's Spelling	Sound-based Strategy	Print-based Strategy	Not Classifiable
Totals				
Percentages				